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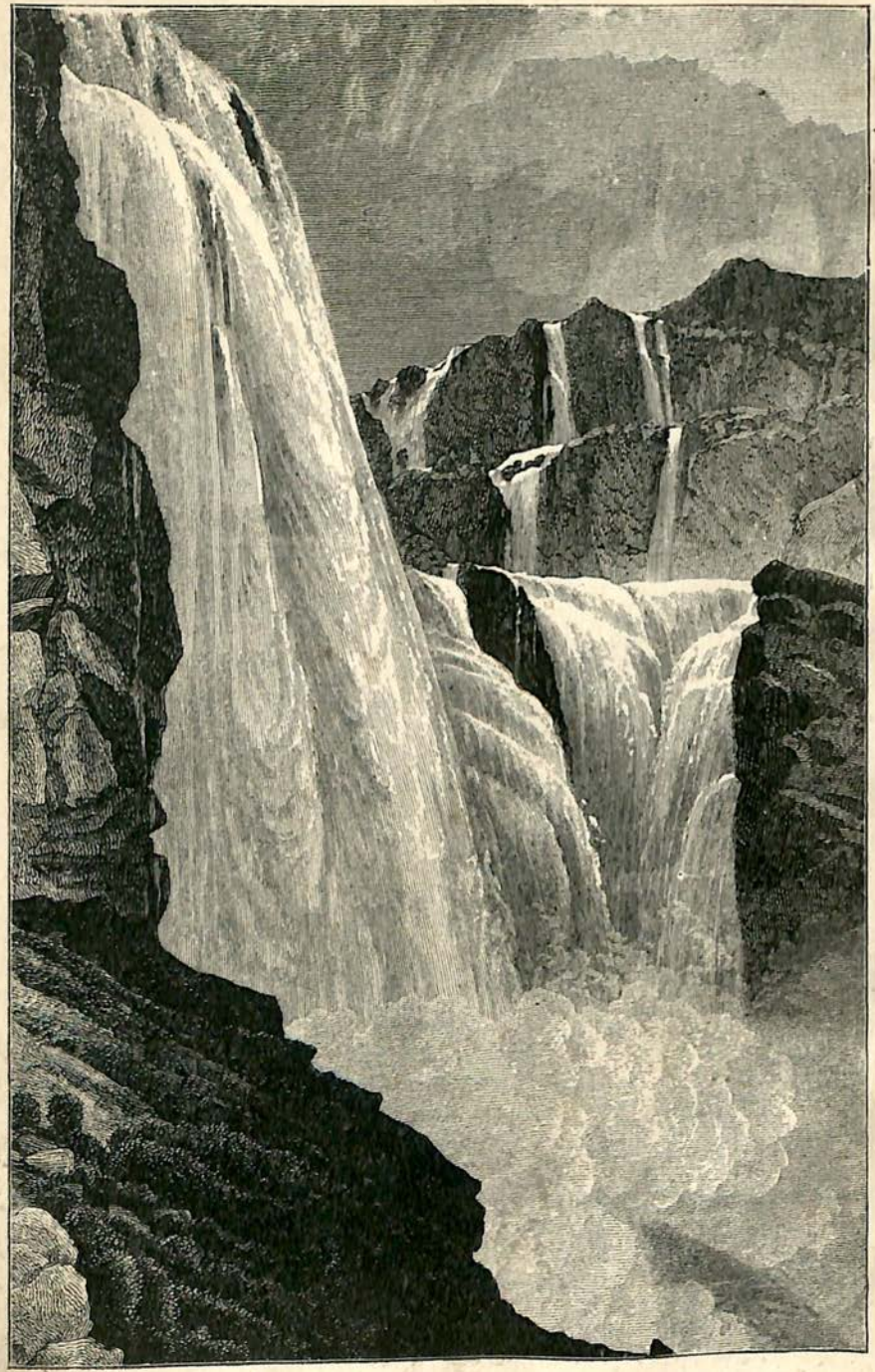

THE SKJÆGGEDALSFOS

UNDER NORTHERN SKIES

BY

CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND" "ROUND ABOUT NORWAY" "CRUISE OF THE RESERVE SQUADRON" "IN THE BLACK FOREST" ETC.

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LONDON

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"Oh! the vigour with which the air is rife!
The spirit of joyous motion;
The fever, the fulness of animal life,
Can be drain'd from no earthly potion!
The lungs with the living gas grow light,
And the limbs feel the strength of ten,
While the chest expands with its madd'ning might,
God's GLORIOUS OXYGEN."

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON.

UNDER NORTHERN SKIES.

CHAPTER I.

LONDON TO GOTHENBURG.

ENQUIRIES as to the best way of reaching Sweden by sea all pointed to the crossing from Hull to Gothenburg. The passage was shorter and the boats were better. As it turned out, the boat for that particular date was rather worse than better. The usual vessel had gone off to the East to carry out healthy troops and bring others back invalided, by order of the great Circumlocution Office in power; and for the present this small boat had taken her place.

"Express leaves King's Cross at 9.15; excellent train," remarked the Pall Mall office, in tones which said that if the train did not run you on board, at least it put you alongside. Imagine, then, one's sensations when, on reaching Selby at 1.30 A.M., in utter

darkness, the door was thrown open by a porter announcing in tones that for once were only too distinct:

"Change for Hull."

"How long to wait here?" was the natural question.

"Train due at 4.30, sir; mostly behind time."

Four-thirty, and it was now half-past one. Three hours in the dead of a cold, almost frosty night, though the month was July, at a small country junction; a waiting-room about six feet square, cheerless and dirty, lighted by a feeble gas burner; a table strewn with decaying cabbage leaves; one man stretched at full length asleep on a bench, another vainly trying to imitate him upon a chair. To take up quarters in such a den was not to be thought of. Two half tipsy soldiers were sprawling on a bench outside in the dark. And here one was expected to remain for three hours or longer, without using strong language or otherwise proving that human nature has limits of endurance.

The only other traveller who had alighted was a young Swede, bound for his native country. Companions in misfortune are attracted towards each other, and, under such circumstances, an hour will do the work of months. Before long we had become old friends, with only one cause of regret in common —that the Pall Mall office and the railway company were not able to hear all the merited abuse showered upon their offending heads.

The hours dragged their slow lengths away. As the station was in the blackness of darkness we strolled about the town. It was plunged in silence and slumber; in darkness also, for the streets were not lighted. No "pallid rays" from ancient oil or modern gas made that darkness more visible; the moon did not give her light, and stars faintly flickered. Though dying for a cup of tea—we would almost have paid for it in gold—it was not to be had. Not even a dog or cat crossed our path during those silent hours.

A solitary watchman keeping guard over a fire in a street undergoing repairs was the one exception to the death-in-life state of things reigning here. Every time we passed he gazed in consternation, as if wondering whether we were ghosts doomed to walk the earth until cock-crow. Once when we stopped to speak to him, he visibly shivered, stirred his fire into a blaze, and was altogether so terrified that in pity we passed on. Well he might. Who but ghosts would patrol a silent and sleeping town for hours in the dead of night?—Ghosts or unhappy mortals fast qualifying for the land of shadows through the barbarities of a Pall Mall office, and the criminal arrangements of a still more barbarous railway company. The river on our right looked cold and sluggish, the flat country beyond, bare, bleak, and desolate.

There was some slight compensation—also of a ghostly kind—in tracing the outlines of the fine old church, substantial and stately in the darkness, sur-

rounded by quiet graves and sleeping dead. As the dawn broke in the East, the church growing more visible grew also more solemn and beautiful; a Gothic pile with a splendid west front. But even in this we were not to be altogether gratified. Guarded by railings, the gates locked and barred, it was impossible to approach within yards of the building. "Safe bind," may be the motto of the Selbyites, but here there was nothing but the dead to steal, and they surely are sacred?

The longest night has an end; our train came up at last. But the hands of Selby church clock had pointed to five before we left the station behind us. Three hours and a half since we had turned out into cold and darkness: human nature so demoralised by exhaustion that the smell of the packed pine-apples on the platform almost tempted one to break the Eighth Commandment, and throw consequences to the winds.

Hull at last, also in repose; houses closed, blinds down, shutters up. Two flys at the station, one of which fell to our lot. A tug at the landing-stage waited to convey us to a vessel some six or seven hundred yards from the shore, looking in the distance so small and ugly, we heard she was the Gothenburg steamer with dismay. It was the last straw. We felt that from first to last we had been snared and deluded.

But every cloud has a silver lining. On board, the first thing to reconcile one to the inevitable was a prodigal supply of tea, simply life-healing after a

night spent in Selby streets. Second consolatory item was to hear that small though the boat, she was the fastest in the service. Finally, she was commanded by a pleasant and kindly captain.

We started on Saturday morning. The sea, calm as a mill-pond, remained so to the end. Sunset and Sunday night found us among the chances and changes of the uncertain Cattegat; a very lovely scene. The sun went down, and the waters grew flushed and splendid as the brilliant heavens above them. Countless rocks and islands were tipped with gold. Twilight fell, but not darkness. The everchanging sky and water wrapped all in a dream of beauty. We were no longer on earth, but in a land unknown to night; unknown to anything but soft and balmy airs, and skies rainbow-tinted and infinitely more gorgeous. Birds, standing out in clear outline upon the rocks, gazed with suspicion at the advancing monster, taking wing with wild clang as it approached, and giving warning to other birds, of whom possibly they were the watchmen. Then the whole flock would fly to some far-off refuge and once more settle down to repose.

Sweden's long, low shores gradually became less barren and deserted. Houses singly or in small colonies began to arise, and every now and then bonfires flared and blue lights shot up into the sky. The Swedes were amusing themselves after their own heart, and devoting Sunday evening to fireworks and fêtes champêtres. No schoolboy was ever fonder of

coloured lights and illuminations of any sort than they.

In the deepening gloom it seemed an endless steaming upwards into the land, for the mouth of the Göta river is five miles from the town. The water narrowed, the banks on either side grew indistinct, but long before reaching Gothenburg one saw how, on ordinary days, they must be full of life and activity. Timber and dockyards, ironworks and forges—labour of every kind here found a welcome and a home.

At length Gothenburg, the landing-stage and Custom House: the latter a large, long building, with which we were to have nothing to do to-night. Officers came on board to clear hand-bags and any small luggage wanted for present use. Leaving the remainder for the next morning, we set foot on Swedish soil as the clock struck midnight.

So a first impression of Sweden was gathered in the darkness of the witching hour—for darkness had now fallen. It was a perfect night, the stars brilliant and large as they are not seen in England. The sky, an immense purple dome, overshadowed the fair city, quiet and sleeping; streets were deserted; no sound except the rattling of the truck in the distance bearing one's luggage to the hotel. Our acquaintance with sleeping towns and midnight strolls was growing frequent and familiar.

Under this night sky, this solemn silence, Gothenburg seemed imposing: wide thoroughfares, substantial houses, and canals running through many of the

streets. So it proved in broad daylight. If Stockholm has been called the Venice of the North, Gothenburg may be called its Rotterdam. And with more reason, for the Dutch had no concern with the rise and progress of the Capital, but much to do with Gothenburg's early days.

There all likeness ceases. The houses look quite

GOTHENBURG.

new; very comfortable inside, no doubt, but outwardly not beautiful. They might have been brought bodily from a Paris boulevard, and planted here. Very different the aspect of Rotterdam, with its quaint old houses, gabled, pointed, and picturesque; tree-lined streets and quays; multitude of barges on the canals with flags gaily flying in the breeze, and

harmonising so well with the ancient buildings and bright blue sky. There is nothing of all this in Gothenburg. Few trees cast their shadows upon the hot pavement, and the canals seem to have been made less for use than ornament. For one barge quietly moored here or making its way through the city, in Rotterdam you will see a hundred.

But how describe the heat of Gothenburg? Its inhabitants say it is built in a hole, and it certainly lies in a hollow: surrounded by hills, which, invisible from the town, are apparent enough the moment you leave it. Thus Gothenburg is sheltered, hot and enervating. It was Hard Labour only to breathe or move about. In spite of those wide thoroughfares there seemed a want of air difficult to account for. But the intense heat of those first few days only too soon gave place to an opposite extreme.

Few travellers stay here long. Those on pleasure bent touch at Gothenburg for two reasons: it is the nearest port from England, and it is the starting-point for reaching Stockholm by the Gotha canal; one of the things to be done in Sweden. Some say they prefer coming down the canal *from* Stockholm; but that is a mere spirit of contrariety. We all have friends endowed with this virtue, and know its meaning. Open doors and windows ought to be closed, and *vice versâ*. If the wind is north, lamentations that it is not south; if west, why is it not east? In reply to the usual enquiry, they are pretty well, but expect to feel very differently in an hour's time. If

unusually well yourself and inclined to see things couleur de rose, they declare that you look uncomfortable, hollow about the eyes, haggard and careworn, whilst this unnatural cheerfulness is a sign of approaching evil. It is not at all an uncommon type, but socially disastrous.

But if Gothenburg has its disadvantages (what place on earth has not? Where will you find perfection? Human nature itself would rise up against such a state of things), it has much to be thankful for. Large, and commercially prosperous, it breathes forth an air of wealth and self-satisfaction. Its merchants have their country retreats, more or less extensive; and those who cannot claim this privilege have any number of island or inland resorts, where in the hot summer months they lay up for themselves a store of health for the long and trying winters of the North.

And for those who have to remain stationary all the year round, there are parks, where of an evening they listen to the town band with more or less edification, according as they are of a frivolous or serious, light or classical, turn of mind. As a rule, in Sweden the lighter tone seemed to dominate.

Adjoining Norway, allied to it by circumstance if not in heart, one endows the Swedes with the sober qualities of the Norwegians. One makes a mistake—an ordinary result where fact does not form the basis of reflection. And as a matter of fact the Swedes are very opposed to the Norwegians in

disposition and temper. No doubt there are a multitude of exceptions; and to judge of a nation without seeing much of its interior life is impossible. But in passing through a country, if you observe at all, some idea must be formed of its people. So judged, the Swedes are not a very serious, or apparently a very religious nation. They claim the reputation of being more civilised and refined, very much in advance of the Norwegians, yet if they gain in one way they certainly lose in another.

To begin with, their manner of living is not the best in the world, and rather encourages the state of singular embonpoint to which so many attain almost as by inheritance; rendering life a burden at an age when it might be still almost green in the bud. Before the chief meals of the day they have a digestive introduction, called smörgasbord. Knife or fork in one hand, bread or thin biscuit in the other, they circulate round a table, groaning with small dainties, gravely weighing what most will tempt the present mood. A satisfactory and abundant choice is followed by a wine-glass or two of the neat spirit of the country, pleasant by force of habit, but not wholesome. Seats are then taken at the general table, and the heavier meal commences.

Outdoor amusements are not more satisfactory. It was difficult even to hear good music, though the Swedes are musical. Classical pieces were hardly ever attempted by their bands, whose best performances under the circumstances were their own quaint

and curious compositions, often very original, with crude harmonies and modulations that led one into unexpected regions musical, and were full of the wild spirit of the North.

There are drives about Gothenburg which take you into park-like grounds, laid out with artificial waters, and trees of every shade and variety. Others end in barren heaths, where dog-roses grow in wild and very lovely profusion, and extensive views of the surrounding neighbourhood are found. And there is so much of this hilly, rocky heath that one leaves with a general impression of an unfertile neighbourhood. The finest views overlook the harbour and all the life upon the waters. Steamers and vessels of all sorts and conditions are constantly going to and fro between the ceaseless industry of the banks of the Göta elf. The passage up the river, interesting by reason of rocks and islands, the life and industry of its shores, yet seems interminable. It is something like steaming up a Norwegian fjord, but with a difference. In place of wildness and grandeur, poetry and romance, you have here the spirit of enterprise and commerce: the power that still rules the world, and will do so while the world lasts.

The hotels are not good. There is a prosy and commercial air about them, only becoming perhaps in this prosperous and commercial city. Brass-bound boxes meet you on every landing, and German names prove that here, as elsewhere, the Teutonic

element has found a local habitation. Many of the merchants of Gothenburg are German, whilst the head of all is a Scotchman. Some of the steamers running to and fro bear Scotch names. If on a steamer yourself, deep in some book or an absent mood, on suddenly looking up you might at the first moment fancy yourself on the Clyde, or steaming out of Leith harbour: awaking only after a confused interval to the fact that these are Swedish waters.

The best hotel is Hauglund's. The Göta Källare, over the way, is in the same hands, but the rooms are not so good. As there is no restaurant at Hauglund's, everyone has to cross to the Göta Källare for meals. The separate restaurant method is found in nearly all Swedish hotels; each meal is paid for at the time, and table d'hôte is almost unknown. It is a troublesome system, with advantages all in favour of the landlord. Unfortunately, it has become rather universal, not only in Sweden, but elsewhere.

One soon discovers, also, that many of the hotels have two prices, one for their own countrymen and Germans, another for the English: a system, possibly, not confined to Sweden and the North; and as the Germans have lately taken it into their heads to travel, they reap the benefit of this quiet understanding.

But let us dismiss grievances, real or imaginary—for travelling is not now what it has been in the past, and the days for the Grand Tour as it was done by our forefathers are ended.

Then it was the favoured few who thus completed their education, before beginning the serious work of life. Chance acquaintances frequently became life-long friends, and the delights of companionship added to the charms of Nature. Very emphatically, nous avons changé tout cela. The Grand Tour is broken up into a multitude of small excursions extending

GOTHENBURG.

over many years, and Murray, Baedeker, and Personally Conducted Parties have brought the impossible within reach of all. It follows that where all travel, kindred spirits seldom meet, for the nice people of the world are said to be few and far between. Carlyle would hardly have admitted even as much as this, and one feels comfortably within bounds

in making the statement, as speaking with authority.

And after all, can the world's madding crowd cloud Nature's beauties? Those beauties that lift one to the Gates of Heaven, and admit the soul, if not to the Holy of Holies, at least to a mysterious communion with the unseen, whose influence does not pass away. They who have not this sympathy with Nature cannot hear her voice or interpret her secrets. For them her best powers are lost. Yet she is bountiful, and would not send any away empty. Her power and beauty may be found by all: not only in the broad lines and trumpet tones of the blue sky and glowing sunshine, the towering snow-capped mountains, the sleeping valleys, and the rolling ocean; but in the still small voices of creation; the very glinting and rustling of the leaves, the murmuring of the stream, the velvet of the greensward, the smallest hedgerow flower, the soft fanning of a summer breeze. Nature has many voices, and they all harmonise in one unceasing hymn of praise, declaring the everlasting truth:

"The Hand that made us is Divine."

CHAPTER II.

THE CATTEGAT—MARSTRAND—COW ISLAND.

MY Swedish companion, of Selby remembrance, left the day after our arrival in Gothenburg for his southern home; and that same night E. came down from Christiania, where for many months he had been reading hard by day, and wasting too much of the midnight oil. Books now thrown aside for many weeks, he had nothing to do but to enjoy himself, and lay up a store of energy for next year's work. Together we were to become acquainted with many parts of Sweden. Here, however, was no chance companion, for E. was a Norwegian friend of long standing. Our present arrangement was no new experience.

The very next day, bidding a short farewell to Gothenburg, we set out in a small steamer for Marstrand, one of the islands of the Cattegat; largest and most frequented of the group. The people of Gothenburg and other places migrate here for the

summer. It is considered a fashionable watering-place, but life is very primitive. Swedish fashion is marked by a simplicity the English might do well to imitate. They bathe and sail, and lead here a quiet, unexciting, altogether charming and healthful existence, invigorating to mind and body.

A brilliant morning, sky and sea flooded with sunshine. Our boat passed down between the lively banks of the elf, steered in and out of the rocks and small islands, and presently found itself in the more open sea. Here, too, numberless rocks and islands cast reflections deep and clear upon the waters. Long stretches of low, barren coast looked as though they might be the home of wild birds, but never the habitations of man. On small detached boulders, here and there rested a seal, that, twisting about its small head at the approach of an enemy, took alarm, and dived into safe regions.

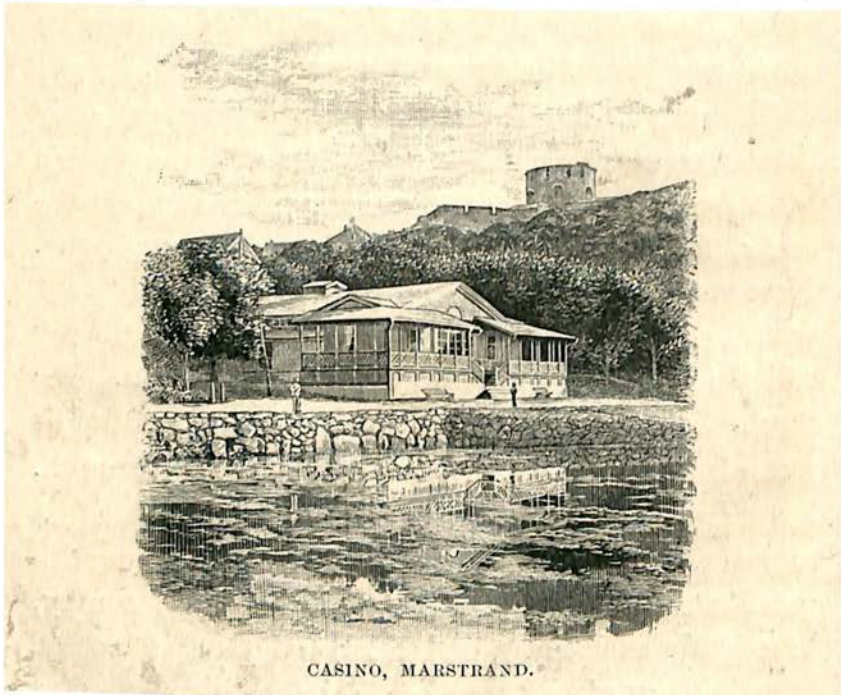
A lively old gentleman on board made himself excessively agreeable and paternal, and seemed inclined to take us under his wing for the remainder of our stay in these waters. He was not going to Marstrand to remain there, but had a place of his own opposite, on Cow Island, a habitation he infinitely preferred. One of those men who would take the whole world under their wing, he seemed unable to meet people without performing some kind action, and leaving behind him some goodly token by way of remembrance. Conversational and communicative, he gave us his whole life and pedigree;

told how he was a merchant in Gothenburg, had an only son who had spent some years in England, and spoke English as a native. Had we been going to remain long in these parts he would have placed him at our disposal; an arrangement the son might have objected to, unless the counterpart of his father. Finally, if we did not find accommodation in Marstrand, he would put us up on Cow Island, and make us as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

The boat went her way in calm waters, and only those who know the Cattegat in her mild moods can realise what this means. Sea-gulls perched upon the rocks, flew clanging and screaming in our wake. Here and there a porpoise rolled over in long, lazy swims, as if it felt that in such weather it decidedly had the best of it—no fond delusion of its own. We reached a passage in the islands so narrow that it seemed impossible for any boat to pass through. But we did pass through, though there was not a foot to spare. A small island on the left, evidently cultivated at the cost of immense pains and industry, bore grain and grass, and here and there a potato crop. A very few houses were also visible; whether sprung from the earth, like the wheat, or placed there by the hand of man, seemed doubtful—for no man was to be seen in all the island's length and breadth. A dog came out of a cottage and ran beside us, and our communicative friend said he expected toll in the form of biscuit or bone from every vessel that passed. His rights withheld, he

loudly objected. The little animal was forgotten to-day, and his indignant bark followed us out of sight and sound.

Soon after this, Marstrand loomed up; an island, picturesque and primitive and tolerably well covered with houses. A half-ruined, grey, abandoned fort, built upon the water's edge, looked out seawards,



CASINO, MARSTRAND.

the summit of the hill crowned by a strongly fortified castle. At the landing-stage the old gentleman signalled out the hotel porter from the crowd, and gave him sundry directions, confiding us to his especial care; directions received with an obedience that seemed to declare him a Lord Paramount of the settlement. Traps were handed over, our fellow-

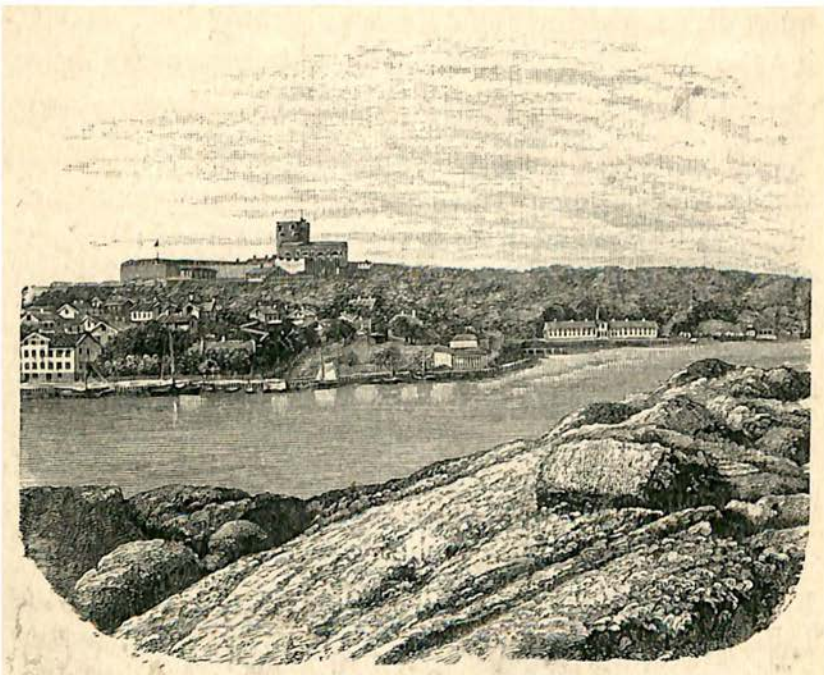
traveller bade us a demonstrative farewell, again begged us to go over to him on Cow Island if we were not comfortable, and each went his way.

Cow Island, the other side the harbour, for a long sojourn certainly looked more open and inviting than Marstrand. There was a special brightness upon it; a wonderfully cool and cleanly look about its few long, low, red-and-white houses, with their slanting roofs. Luxurious balconies also, where one might sit all day long, and lounge and read; or lazily watch Marstrand with its imposing fortress; or the boats sailing about with white wings spread; or the ferryman going to and fro between the islands with his ever-changing freight.

As our object was to see Marstrand, we determined to make the best of it, and followed the guide an uphill and somewhat intricate way to the hotel, which looked primitive and unofficial. There seemed doubt also as to whether we could be accommodated. After a great deal of running about, and mysterious conferences, and evident allusions to the Lord of Cow Island, two rooms the size of nutshells were placed at our disposal. Even these would not be at liberty until the present occupants had departed by the two o'clock boat for Gothenburg. Until then we must be content to remain in the condition of waifs and strays: homeless, though not precisely ragged and tanned.

One felt very out of the world. Everything was on a primitive scale, in itself refreshing. Although

so many people come year after year, for rest and bathing and harmless recreation, nothing has sprung up in the shape of fashionable hotels, or piers, or promenades. Yet everything in the inn was well if simply done, and its wines were the best and most reasonable we found in all Sweden. The first word



MARSTRAND, FROM COW ISLAND.

on the menu of the day was "Jerusalem Soup," a comical name, that at once brought to mind an incident in our own favoured island.

We picked up an old prayer-book one morning in the Squire's pew of a certain country church. Inside the cover, and evidently written years before, was the following domestic passage, jotted down by a

Squire whose reign was over, and replied to by his sharer of earthly joys and sorrows, who now also slept by his side in the family vault:

"My dear, I want to ask Williams to luncheon. What have you?"

To which the lady replied, in a fine Italian hand and with a brevity rare in her sex:

"Jerusalem Soup."

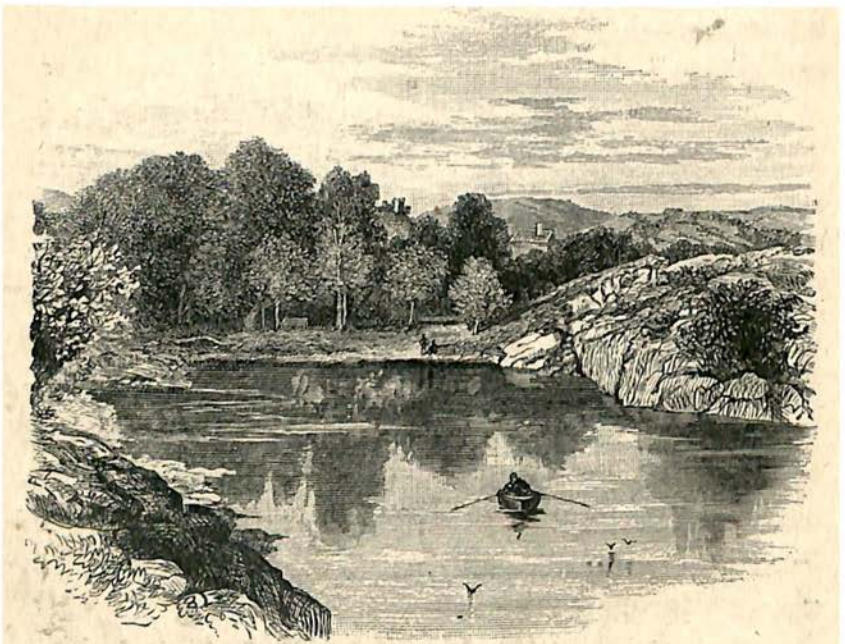
(Query: Did Williams get his invitation?)

And here we met once more with the word in Marstrand, but never again under those Northern skies.

I was the only Englishman on the island—where few English are ever seen—and, as such, became an object of general attention. A visit from the late lamented Jumbo could hardly have created greater surprise. People audibly wondered whether we had come to spy out their land; or discover the secrets of their fortifications; or whether this Madeira of Sweden, as it is called, was being tried as a last remedy for consumption.

The island itself, without being startling, is interesting. So far from the world, and all its hubble-bubble, so primitive and simple, it could scarcely be otherwise. It is hilly, the town is irregularly built, without plan or design, and the houses are sheltered. None occupy the summit of the hill; none face the open sea, or have that coveted prospect, a far-off horizon. The chief part faces Cow Island and the harbour, a view pretty and interesting, but limited.

Small houses, most of them devoted to lodgings, are perched in all sorts of singular and apparently dangerous places. The ground floor of one house will look on to the roof of another, and it was sometimes difficult, on coming unexpectedly to the back of a house, to know how to get round to the



HERMIT'S LAKE, MARSTRAND.

front. The place is sufficiently important to have a band, though limited in numbers and execution.

The walks about Marstrand were also limited, but they, on the other hand, evidently did great execution, of a tender nature. They were very pleasant, these walks, whether rounding the quay and the harbour, or climbing to the back of the island and

gazing seawards, or making a pilgrimage to the castle that crowned the hill, where you revelled in a splendid view. They are wonderfully careful about this castle. Foreigners are never admitted within its precincts, and if by chance or stratagem one manages to obtain entrance, consternation follows. It is strongly fortified, and is called the Gibraltar of the North. With the name all possible resemblance ceases.

Of all places in Marstrand it was the most to be enjoyed. Though not admitted within the castle, you may haunt the ramparts and outer fortifications at pleasure; spend days reclining upon the green slopes, asking for nothing better. Free, wild, primitive, out of the world, is the life. You may lie and dream, read, sketch, or gaze at the clouds, and few will intrude upon your solitude. Marstrand lies below, the harbour surrounds you, Cow Island is opposite, with its cluster of white and red Swiss-like roofs; boats are flitting about, or venturing out to sea; the free winds of heaven play about you. It is perfect rest; rest of body, mind and spirit. Not everyone knows what this implies. But it is all very quiet, and they who like gaiety or excitement must never think of Marstrand for a moment. To them it would be nothing but a weariness to the flesh.

We went over to Cow Island that afternoon, but our late fellow traveller was not to be seen. Possibly he was taking a siesta, or perhaps he was out shooting.

Scarcely a soul did we meet, so it may be that they were *all* taking siestas. A wild-looking, uncultivated place, with rocky undulations rather than hills; masses of grey stone that would remain barren to the end of time, where not even a fern or weed could take root. Here and there was a small pond or lake, well stocked with fish possibly, but we saw no one to give us information. The place seemed abandoned and we in possession. Even in the small settlement we had not come across a living creature. The group of houses left behind, we had plunged into solitude and desolation as perfect as it must have been in the days of Adam. Taking the only road to be seen, it led us to a very proper spot for such an atmosphere —the churchyard, where the dead rest in scarcely greater silence and solitude than the living.

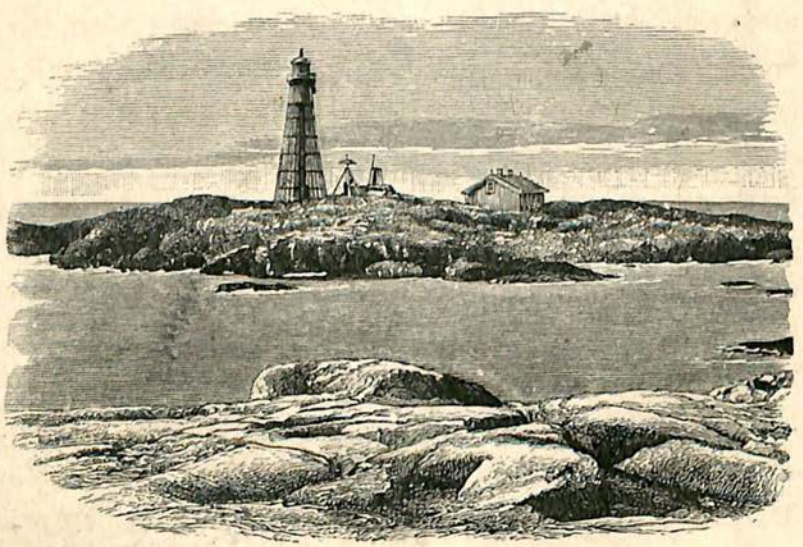
Suddenly we heard the sound of wheels, and immediately after up came a driver with a wagonette and pair of horses. Though clumsy and original, the whole turn out, it seemed impossible that anything so civilised should exist in the island. It was the first sign of animated life we had seen. But there it was, and the man agreed to drive us, and did drive us to some charming grounds that seemed a compromise between public tea-gardens and private property. They were too well kept to be in any way public, yet we were evidently at liberty to roam about. A pavilion—a sort of garden boudoir, elegantly appointed —invited us to enter and explore. Sounds of life and harmony; voices sweet and clear, seemed to

lure us onwards. We resisted, and passed on to the sea-shore, a bathing-house and a small landing-stage, round which the calm blue waters lapped and flashed in the sunshine with soothing and refreshing sound. Oh, for a plunge in their cool depths! The shore rounded in a long-drawn-out lovely green curve. Looking towards the far-off horizon was like gazing upon the confines of the earth, the end of space. Altogether the most secluded little paradise possible, a perfect surprise and astonishment in this hitherto barren and rocky-looking island; an oasis in the desert.

Jehu took us back the way we had come, probably the only road existing in the island. Depositing us once more at the little settlement of houses, quiet and deserted as when we had landed, he disappeared, one hardly knew how or where. Surely the place was under a spell, and everyone had been put to sleep for a hundred years. The presence alone of our jovial fellow traveller ought to have filled the island, and made itself abundantly realised; yet nothing was seen or heard of him, and only a flag flying in the breeze marked his habitation. It was always flying when he was there, he had told us; a sort of regal intimation that the king was in residence. Vive le roi!

The old ferryman was plying to and fro, and quiet though the place, seldom crossed without a fare. From Cow Island, Marstrand itself looked imposing. Houses lined the shores, some quite large and conse-

quential. Old fruit women guarded their stalls in one long row upon the quay. Away to the left was the grey fort, looking seawards through the straits of the harbour, watching for an enemy that did not come and never meant to come: a remnant of bygone days; a silent witness to departed glories. Round went the land, an emerald in the setting of a pearly sea. Above the town rose castle and ramparts, a



MARSTRAND.

dignified crown to the small, interesting island. Guns, sentries, all the paraphernalia of war might be there, but they were out of sight. From this point the fortress looked the essence of peace and security.

We crossed over. The afternoon was waning and the whole community seemed to have turned out

for promenade. Ladies in cotton gowns, fashionably made, marked the beauty of Marstrand, and young men with slim canes evidently thought they formed its grace. Of course there was flirting; human nature is the same all the world over; but it seemed all very innocent and primitive; so many shepherds and shepherdesses playing out their little pastorals. One large sailing boat after another—fine boats they were, with their white sails—put out to sea. Voices rose in laughter upon the air, and here and there the swelling harmonies of song were wafted to the land. Life was very pleasant and enjoyable, and let it be repeated, seemed innocent and beautiful: a free, frank, manly and maidenly appearance that rejoiced the heart.

We went up the heights and watched the sunset of a brilliant night. The sky was flushed with all its colours, and small rosy clouds sailed leisurely towards the East. Red and flashing was the water as the sun went down. One or two lingering boats were quietly making for the harbour. Everyone on land had gone in to supper: pastorals were suspended for realities. We had the place, as it seemed, to ourselves. Perfect silence and solitude. E. fell into a melancholy reverie; it was too much for him. In truth, the departed sun, the utter stillness of earth, sea and sky became oppressive. It seemed a death in nature, the end of life, the consummation of all things—of which each going down of the sun is at least an emblem. We sat until the rosy sky had

given place to grey twilight, and the flush upon the water had disappeared.

Then we also went down. People were coming out again to enjoy the cool evening and the modest band, whilst couples wandered about under the shade of the trees and pretended to be listening, and not to be absorbed in each other. Darkness fell, and enwrapped the little place. Even Cow Island could only be distinguished by a few twinkling lights, where possibly our fellow traveller was entertaining the festive board with an account of his journey from Gothenburg; and how an Englishman was encamped in Marstrand; and what a flurry the castle would be in when it became known; and how the Guard would be doubled and the keys of the great gates would be placed under special custody.

For ourselves we thought nothing of all this, but in innocence of heart and honesty of intention, we sought our pillows, and, rocked in the cradle of the Cattegat, slept the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER III.

MARSTRAND—DOWN THE CATTEGAT.

A STILL unclouded sky, and all the freshness of early morning, made of Marstrand a wonderfully out-of-the-world and lovely picture.

Over the way on Cow Island the flag was flying above the long white house, and its owner having come into residence, no doubt it would be seen flying for many days to come. The harbour looked brighter than ever. Its waters sparkled in the sunshine, and white-sailed boats flitted to and fro.

We spent most of that morning on the ramparts, gazing upwards and outwards. Islands far and near looked the emblem of repose. The surrounding sea shimmered in the sunlight, until one grew dazzled with ceaseless flashings. Not least refreshing was the greensward on which we lounged and commanded this little world. White houses with their red roofs came out in picturesque contrast, and reminded one vividly of a Norwegian landscape. We might have

been journeying to the North Cape, calling at one or other of the countless settlements the boat touches on her way: small islands in the sea or towns on the mainland; a constant cruising in and out of rocks and land and water; an ever-varying scene of simple and primitive life, which gives to that voyage a charm possessed by few others.

But we were not in Norway. E. would not have admitted it for a moment. Swedes and Norwegians —each to his own. We were not even in Sweden, but in an island of the Cattegat, belonging to the mother country. And lying idly on the cool green-sward of the fortifications, the dignified castle giving a romantic interest to the scene: lying under the broad hot sunshine, life and air and a profound calm absorbed with every indrawn breath, we confessed that it would be good to stay there for all our leisure time. To spend day after day revelling in mere existence; turning to a favourite book when tired of watching clouds and sea, bathers, boaters, flirters: and those sedate couples who, having outlived their romance, gaze upon the latter with a serene pity that bears witness to the nature of the soft whispers these happy if deluded souls are uttering: the fools' paradise they make for themselves.

And wherefore not? Youth has the best of it, after all, and a fools' paradise is better than no paradise at all. Dreams are better than stern facts. Castles in the air raise us for a moment into happiness, and when they crumble we must escape the ruins as best

we can. To trace imaginary faces in the fire is pleasanter and more wholesome than to ponder over the cold realities of an empty hearth. So, in this life, let us cheat realities by living as much as we can in our imagination; let us have our dreams, our castles in the air, our fools' paradise. Be sure the world will do its best to undeceive us; will prevent us from hugging our phantoms too closely and turning them into idols.

We agreed that it would be good and wise to spend many days in Marstrand, in an existence health-giving above all other. But this had not entered into our plans; we had other thoughts and prospects. And again, dark days would come, when skies would be overcast, rain would fall, and Marstrand would plunge one from fields Elysian into very opposite regions. In wet weather, Marstrand must be simply intolerable. And to-day there was something so wonderful in the air, so brilliant in the sunshine, we asked ourselves if it were possible that a change was not at hand.

So we left the ramparts for the funny little streets, which more than ever seemed without plan or design. Now we came unexpectedly upon a clumsy triangular square; now, at the end of a tortuous maze, to a cul-de-sac; at the entrance, perhaps, of a small house; with the option of throwing ourselves from a back-window into depths unknown, and so escaping back into this world or another; or of returning by the way we came. The latter plan seemed the wiser.

Plunges into unseen depths seldom lead even to a fools' paradise.

We inspected the quaint old church, which had some black, interesting wood carving about it, and pictures fearfully and wonderfully drawn, and a small dark sacristy with a few old books and ancient vestments that, like old lace, were probably all the more valuable for being yellow and dirty. Altogether a handsome church for this little island, dating back to the fifteenth century. Handsome, no doubt, for that reason: for Marstrand, like a faded beauty, has had a past; a history warlike and commercial, when it was of greater importance than now seems possible. Its prominent situation explains the mystery, and it has been called the key of the North Sea.

A youthful guide piloted us to the celebrated St. Eric's Grotto: a swampy marsh with a great hole in a rock, where the saint was wont to rest, and a group of trees where he walked and meditated.

A Druidical-looking spot, that, instead of being on a height, like most Pagan remains, was in a hollow. Even the sea which rolled and surged within a few feet was hidden by slippery, sloping rocks difficult to climb. There was also a spring here: a deep well, from which our guide drew a supply of water clear as crystal and cold as ice. In days gone by this spring was dedicated to heathen rites—Druidical or other—possibly all banished and put to flight under the dispensation of St. Eric. But of this there is no record, and here again we may

dream our dreams and draw our own conclusions. It required, indeed, no vivid imagination to picture the saint as he paced these small groves in holy meditation fancy free, missal in hand; an aged figure and a long grey beard; a calm eye undimmed by the passions of humanity; a far-away gaze opening to the mysteries of the unseen world. And who shall say that these mystic hermits, with minds prepared by devotion, and frames mortified by fasting, were not nearer the Unseen than we, who, in the toil and trouble of existence, are taken up with the cares and riches and deceitfulness of life?

It was one of our last impressions of Marstrand. Presently the steamer came up that was to bear us away. Everyone had collected to see it arrive and depart. It came as a breath from the world, and departed as a messenger. Bells rang, gangways were withdrawn, paddles turned; the water splashed and foamed, we fell away from the landing-quay, Marstrand receded. A crowd of pocket-handkerchiefs waved: as natural a token of farewell in these latitudes as a handshake in England. Wherever train leaves platform or boat its moorings, the air becomes white with handkerchiefs agitated until the last remnant of boat or train has passed out of sight.

To-day the little crowd was no exception to the rule. White handkerchiefs—and handkerchiefs that once were white—grew faint and indistinct. We passed the deserted fortress—no longer needed,

since Marstrand in its decline has ceased to excite the envy of ambitious pirates. Steaming out of the harbour we saw the island no more. Inhabitants and sojourners went back to their everyday life and amusements—one day so like another: and we returned to Gothenburg the way we had come.

Hotter and more enervating than ever seemed Gothenburg after Marstrand. Devoutly we wished for the hour when we might leave it for ever. Close and tiring by day, at night it yielded neither rest nor quiet. At two o'clock in the morning a procession of carts thundered through the streets with a noise that would have wakened the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, forbidding all further repose for anyone but Gothenburg's well-seasoned inhabitants. Something in the construction of houses or streets, or both combined, makes the sound of anything passing down all Swedish thoroughfares terrific, jarring one's very nerves, making one almost envy the deaf. A learned engineer explained the mystery by showing how in some special way sound was not deadened by the ordinary methods at the time of construction. But the cause was technical and abstruse, and for us remained a mystery: enough that the effect was more than a reality. Like a familiar haunting its victim, it followed one throughout Sweden.

CHAPTER IV.

FOREST LIFE.

I HAD promised to visit friends living south of Gothenburg: a promise made without knowing that it would entail a twenty-six hours' journey by sea and land, and a night at an hotel en route. On their part these friends had no idea that sundry plans would limit the visit to twenty-four hours. Having promised, I performed, and did not regret doing so. The only parallel case at this moment recurring to memory is that of a sixteen hours' rough drive once taken in Shetland to pay a morning call.

E. decided to vegetate the while in Gothenburg, revelling in sea-bathing, and searching the town for hidden beauties.

The boat started at eight o'clock, and was due at Halmstad—first stage in the journey—about five in the afternoon. A more perfect day never existed. More beautiful than any that had gone before, it was surely too glorious to last. So indeed

it proved. For many succeeding days and weeks, perfection as regarded weather became a recollection of the past.

All day we steamed down the coast of Sweden. If the shores were flat and uninteresting, the very beauty of sky and sunshine, the extreme rarity of the atmosphere, invested them with a charm the more enjoyed that one felt it due to the uncertain elements. Only too often this Cattegat behaves with indifference to the comfort and even life of travellers at its mercy. But to-day oil might have been thrown upon its troubled surface. Every small object on land or sea found its reflection. The sun beamed upon the waters in great patches of light; poured down upon the deck as if it would set all blazing. Scarcely a breath of air stirred, beyond the slight currents of our own motion. Our little boat was called the "Mermaid," and thanks to the calm sea, no mermaid was ever found in kindlier mood.

We steamed quietly onwards until towards midday: then, rounding a point, turned into the quaint little harbour of Warburg, and discharged a few passengers and a goodly cargo. It was a small sea-bathing place, pleasant and retired. In and about a casino built of wood, cool looking and quite worldly, a few visitors lounged and listened to the strains of a band. Go where you will in Sweden you will find an orchestra, good, bad, or indifferent. Apparently the Swedes will have music, though not often of the best. On the heights of Warburg reposed an old

castle, now fallen from its high estate, and degraded to the level of a House of Correction.

After an hour's stay, almost melted by the sun, we steamed again into broad waters. Dinner had been laid on deck, and under the blue sky nothing could be more charming. The vessel glided along without motion. In the foreground endless low,

HALMSTAD.

green shores were apparently deserted; given over to the gulls and whosoever might choose to make there for himself a habitation. To all seeming, none would dispute his right. Only at wide intervals was there sign or token of life, and then far inland, in the shape of a small village, with perhaps a church spire pointing above the waving trees. In its trees Sweden

has certainly the advantage over Norway. They are beautiful and well grown, and of many kinds.

But we wanted no variety this morning in our passage down the Cattegat. People and their habitations were matters of indifference. We had nobler objects to contemplate. The ever-rolling sea upon the beach; long stretches of glistening sand on which the tide broke with soothing murmurs; white shores backed by green slopes and reaches, immense extents of barren, heathlike ground, giving place occasionally to cultivated undulations. Again, there were rocks: not high and frowning, not the haunts and homes of the wild bird, but low and polished by the action of countless ages of receding and advancing tides. To-day the water lapped gently round them, plashing and caressing, and retiring without even the energy to break into spray. More often the angry Cattegat lashes itself into fury, and beats and breaks upon the shores. In such mood you will see little beauty in her, nothing attractive in land and sky. For her motion is peculiarly restless, and few withstand her influence.

About five o'clock we passed up the Nissa to Halmstad—a fine stream, with long reaches on either side, forming a sort of natural harbour and break water; possessing, said the pleasant captain of the "Mermaid," excellent salmon fishing. The town opened up, and we were soon alongside the quay; a broad thoroughfare stretching upwards beyond the bridge. All journeying was over for the present.

The afternoon train had left, and one must be content with such attractions as Halmstad offered, until seven o'clock the next morning.

These attractions were very modest. A less exciting town as it appeared that evening would be hard to find. The streets were uninteresting, almost

HARBOUR AND QUAY, HALMSTAD.

deserted. Yet the town has a considerable population, and a flourishing trade in corn and timber. It is a seaport, and has a railway station—privileges certain to be utilised in Sweden to the utmost. There were no shops to speak of, or rather none worth looking at, and Herr Öster—the landlord of the hotel—Mårtenson's—was unable to vary the

monotony of existence by a single word of any language but his own. The inn, with no pretence about it, was quiet and comfortable. Yet even here the march of progress has set its seal, and living is twice as expensive in Halmstad as it was ten years ago.

The pleasantest part of the town was that bordering the river. Here you might take an oar or paddle your own canoe, and, running up beside the Tivoli Gardens, listen to the band. This Tivoli is the rendezvous of the town. People meet of an evening, repose on benches or stroll about, talk and enjoy music, all in a very unemotional sort of way. Tivoli exhibited its light on a hill, where you had the orchestra on one hand, and on the other a view of a small lake, the termination of the Nissa, and a large white house reposing in park-like grounds and embowered in spreading trees.

Within a few yards of Tivoli, its little crowd and sweet strains, is the one antiquity of the town: an old gateway, massive and not beautiful, but worthy of the honour due to age. Some time ago a barbarous town council decided that, cumbering the ground, it must be removed; but the inhabitants rose in a body with such determination that the council, in terror for their lives, reversed their decision, and the gateway was saved. It is seen from far down the principal street, and gives it a quaint interest and distinctive character.

Next morning arrived almost sooner than it was

welcome. At six o'clock a watchful attendant appeared with a long, unintelligible sentence, evidently having the end and aim of proclaiming that train and tide wait for no man. But this is not the case in Sweden. Trains do wait, and will even put back for anyone who may be seen struggling up a road, or frantically waving from a distressed vehicle.

OLD GATEWAY.

This morning it started punctually: a short train, with three or four carriages and half a dozen passengers.

It was a tedious journey of about four hours, and a distance of some fifty miles. Considering the rapidity of the age, stoppages were endless, waste of time deplorable. How realise the days of our grand-

fathers, who travelled by coach, and thought as much of a journey of two hundred miles as one now thinks of going round the world? In those good old times they prepared for such a journey by making their wills and setting their houses in order; but who dreams of making his will on taking a trip even through the North-West Passage? They must also have had another quality, those forefathers of ours —that virtue of Patience, which seems to be dying out in this nineteenth century, and will probably expire altogether in the twentieth from mere force of circumstance.

It was also a somewhat monotonous journey, though at times very pretty, leading upwards through the valley of the Nissa. Hills, covered with fir trees, broad undulations, long stretches of green fields; dense, dark-looking forests where wild flowers grew, and abundant strawberries—those wild strawberries more plentiful in Sweden than blackberries in our hedges, and, mixed with cream and sugar, are worth a king's ransom. Beside us the river ran, appearing and disappearing in its windings; now so shallow that its rocky bed was laid bare, and again deepening where the banks narrowed. These banks were adorned with a profusion of wild flowers and ferns. Had communication with the engine-driver been possible, he would no doubt have drawn up to allow one to gather them, and pluck the little red strawberries that cried out to be eaten. Probably none of the passengers would have objected or shown surprise.

The Swedes are slow at taking in a fact, and very slow at putting themselves out of the way.

At last our station. The long journey was over. On the platform a kindly face bade us welcome. Happily: for the station had apparently no name, and no guard or porter supplied the deficiency. One might have travelled for another four hours, wonder-

PRINCIPAL STREET, HALMSTAD.

ing whether the end of the world and the station would come together.

"You have really arrived," said a pleasant English voice—and how pleasant a ring it has in distant lands. "But you need not hurry—the train itself is not in a hurry. These slow trains never are."

It was certainly a delightful change to the carriage awaiting us, and we now seemed to bowl along the

road more quickly than the train had run upon the lines.

We appeared to be in the heart of Sweden; as remote from civilisation as the wilds of Australia. Not a house to be seen anywhere; no sign of life; an apparently endless extent of forest—fir trees, and nothing but fir trees. The sensation was inexpressibly delicious. This, indeed, was forest life; life of the forest primeval.

"I am sorry you have to go back so soon," said T. hospitably, in answer to expressions of delight at all this silence and solitude—this endless forest drive. "You have taken a long journey for a very small return."

"This is worth it all," was the only possible reply. "Your lives must be passed amidst all that is beautiful and inspiring in nature, and you ought, every one of you, to be as perfect as your surroundings."

"I don't know," said T. quaintly. "It is very well for those who come from the outer world, glad of rest and change and contrast. But living here all the year round, I think you would sometimes have more than enough of it. The solitude would become appalling; the grandeur, having grown familiar, would cease to charm."

"That seems impossible. The more you see of this, the more it must be loved."

"You are a born lover of the country," returned T., "and delight in all her moods and variations: and

that they are delightful I quite admit. But can you imagine what it is to be shut up here for a whole winter; no neighbours with whom to exchange ideas; nature all dead around you; no singing birds or flowers; snow and ice and a searching cold that never lifts, day after day, and week after week? You would not like that."

HALMSTAD SQUARE AND CHURCH.

"At the present moment one can only imagine what is seen——"

"You only wish to imagine," interrupted T. with a laugh. "But I think your reason goes with me."

"You must prove the truth of your argument before it can be admitted."

"Then it will never be admitted, for you will never try it," said T. dryly. "You could never stand

it. At the end of a month you would fly back to the world, vowing that country life, and forest solitudes, and the whole catalogue of country charms were phantoms of the brain; delusions to be kept for honeymoons, or referred back to Adam and Eve in Paradise."

"Never. This is one of the greatest of earthly pleasures. To be driving, as we are now, through all these beauties; through mile after mile of forest, and feel that it is all your own; that you are free to destroy or to build up, and no one can let or hinder you; that all this solitude is yours to enjoy for ever, and cannot be intruded upon or broken without permission—this ought to make you happy as kings and queens."

"Perhaps more so," laughed T. "If we are to believe our school-books, 'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.' My head is never uneasy."

"Nor your heart," I returned, "or that laugh belies itself. You are rejoicing in the freshness and freedom of your twenty summers, and you are wise. Have you ever walked from one end to the other of your property?"

"Not at one time," answered T. "It is very large. But then," he modestly added, "Sweden is not England."

Fir cones crunched beneath our wheels, squirrels ran from tree to tree, great birds flew over our heads, wondering who thus disturbed their lonely haunts; trees took fantastic forms. Now an old trunk with

withered branches looked like some forest gnome crouching from unseen evil, and now uprose a tall spectre with outstretched arms working spells and incantations.

At length a long low house covering a great extent of ground came into view. A house peculiar to Sweden, almost peculiar to itself, and only one storey high. A portico, many yards wide, was supported by pillars. Round the doorway English faces were assembled; English voices gave welcome.

It was a lovely spot, wild and solitary as the drive had been. One felt out of the world as anyone could feel in mid-ocean. There was no daily postman, and all letters had to be taken to and from the train. Flowers and trees surrounded the house. Not far away was a lake with any amount of boating at command, where tall reeds and rushes bent and waved to the passing breeze. Beyond it long stretches of country; cultivated fields yielding corn and hay in endless extent. The distance was bounded by immense forests, where it seemed that timber might be felled for centuries, yet never missed. Not far from the house, but out of sight, was an immense kitchen-garden with unlimited strawberry beds; and presently a dish was placed upon the dessert-table that would have supplied a small town. Near the strawberry-garden was the ice house, partly underground, with a sufficient supply for the whole year round.

What could be more delightful than to explore this far away settlement? There was all the fresh-

ness of a new feeling about it, of absolute freedom. You might be as eccentric and unconventional as you pleased, without fear of a censorious world. You lived and breathed the pure air of heaven. The world had grown wider, mind and soul expanded with it. Town life, its limits and contractions, conventionalities and stiffness, forms and ceremonies, next door neighbours and opposite windows—all this was shaken off and dismissed, and fell from one like chains of slavery. Hereditary bondsmen are they who live in great cities.

Here was the truer life. A sky above, high, wide, and blue; laughing sunshine that glinted through swaying trees and cast long shadows in the avenues, and invited one to live in the open air. Endless walks through field and forest. Here and there a few cottages where dwelt dependents and farm-labourers, who lived only to obey your will and till the ground. In early morning or the cool of evening, taking boat and idly paddling about the lake, watching the changes in the broad sky, the colours deepening as the sun dipped. Watching the gold-tipped trees changing to darkness, like a dying life, and gloom spreading itself over nature; the depths of the forest turning from the cool shades of day to the melancholy of profound night. Over all, unbroken solitude; not even a far-off glimmer flashing from any window to mark the existence of other lives and domestic dramas in this solitary Eden, this boundless, charming wilderness.

"Neighbours? We may indeed say that we have none, as the word is understood in England," said my hostess. "Our only neighbour is Baron R——, and he is seven miles away. A long drive for a morning call, and so our calls usually last several days. We go over and stay with them, and they come and stay with us. Even this is a delightful break in our monotonous existence. If it were not for books and letters, and the feeling that there is an outer world and that we have friends in it, who, after all, are accessible at any moment: if it were not for this, I think we should die of stagnation."

It was difficult to be convinced. The advantages of the world were infinitely outweighed by all this freedom, these wild beauties, these forest sights and sounds, this sense of possession. Then there was the possibility of filling the house with friends—by far the most real of all social happiness and enjoyment.

"In summer," said my hostess. "But our summers are short, our winters long. Who would stay here a whole winter? And it is worse for us ladies of the family than for the gentlemen. They skate, sleigh, shoot; take long excursions; go off bear-hunting, and so relieve for days together the monotony of perpetual ice and snow. We ladies must be content with skating and sleighing within limits. We vary the sameness of our winter without relieving it."

We were walking through a pine avenue. On the one hand a wood led to charming depths abound-

ing in tangle, wild flowers and ferns; on the other the lake opened out with broad fields beyond, ending in distant forests. Presently a labourer approached, and was stopped by the ladies. His expression was sad, and he had trouble to speak without losing self-control.

"Poor fellow!" said my hostess, after he had passed on with words of consolation; "he has just lost his only boy, a lovely little fellow of five, who took measles and was badly treated. Generally speaking, in illness of any sort they come up to the house, but he did not do so until it was too late. Their ideas of nursing are primitive. Their manner of keeping a patient warm is to smother him in blankets, close all doors and windows, shut out every breath of air that could possibly help to restore him. If he recovers after this, it is thanks to a vigorous constitution which would not let him die."

"The poor fellow seems overwhelmed with his loss."

"He is so. He was very fond of his boy, and was a good father. There is only one girl left now, three years old, and the child's loss will make a great gap in the household."

"Are parents here good to their children?" I asked. "Are the households happy?"

"Yes, as a rule. But the people are simple, and their ideas are elementary. They have few temptations in these out of the world districts: no public-houses to entice them from home and absorb their

wages. As mere labourers the men are sometimes troublesome. And, of course, they are frightful radicals; not so much politically—they are hardly up to that—as socially."

Not least interesting amongst our explorations were visits to the surrounding buildings, out of sight of the house yet within a small radius. Immense stables; great barns filled with hay; granaries holding corn; long cow-houses with endless stalls; great saw-mills, smelling of fir cones, where you might bury yourself in sawdust and revel in the swish-swish of the saw; a corn-mill with immense rollers, the wheel turned by a stream whose waters could be let loose at pleasure.

"A great place for rats," said T. "I have often wished to come across some of them, but have never done so."

As he spoke we heard a skirmish and scamper on the floor above, and immediately after, two enormous rats came gambolling down the stairs, apparently as astonished at our appearance as we were at theirs. They prepared for a precipitate retreat, but we carried sticks, and while T. despatched the one, I was successful with the other. They were monsters indeed.

"These, at any rate, have taken their last toll of our corn," said T. laughing. "To judge by their size, the toll has not been a small one. The granaries are infested with them, and would be, I believe, if we kept a whole army of cats."

The stream received the dead bodies, accorded no worthier burial, and we went our way, extending our walk through endless fields, and looking at the grazing cattle—cows with meek and mild eyes; horses turned into a meadow, wild in the enjoyment of space and liberty.

"How many horses have you?" I asked of T.

"About a hundred and twenty," he answered. "So you see we want plenty of food for them; great barns for the hay, and granaries for corn. Besides that, we have an unlimited number of cows."

"And they must have good hay if they are to give good milk in return. You know the old saying—'Feed a sheep with grass and it repays you in wool.'"

"One of the connecting links running through all creation," said T. rather dreamily. "We depend upon each other. 'All things in one another mingle,' Shelley says; 'the fountain with the river, and the river with the ocean.' So the world goes round, and man, labouring until the evening, manages to make both ends meet."

The sun went down all too soon that day, and twilight with its mysterious shadows fell upon the earth. Breezes rustled and murmured in the tree tops, and bent, and swayed them as if uttering majestic sentiments to which they calmly assented. Voices seemed to come from the depths of the forest, which thrilled one's soul: voices weighted with the solemn mysteries of the supernatural. Darkness

fell and shut out the world. It was nothing now but one great abyss of blackness, sad, melancholy, awe-inspiring. But above, that dark blue vault had taken up the tale, and with its own voice declared the mysteries of creation. Stars flashed and scintillated—countless worlds fulfilling their destiny. An eternity of space, demanding an eternity to traverse, teeming with worlds known and unknown to us, seen and unseen; peopled with possibly a higher order of being than ourselves, going through more stupendous tragedies. And yet: "He holdeth them all in the hollow of His hand, and calleth the stars by their names."

If night came all too soon, so did the hour of final separation. Next morning, after breakfast, it was necessary to be on the wing. The horses came round, farewells were said, we started once more for our splendid drive to the station. Mile after mile through overshadowing forests and endless solitudes. As a flash the visit had passed, and perhaps for that reason its impression remained the more vivid. It certainly left behind it a vision of calm and sylvan retreats, where life passes almost as it might have passed in the first ages of the world; far from the haunts of men, the rush and roar of towns, the disquieting element of crowds, the unsatisfying illusions of society. An Arcadian existence, filled with delights, where nerves were braced, overstrained brains waxed calm, the heart grew light, happiness abounded, and care was only an essence and a name.

Then came the station. Afar off was the train steaming up that was to bear one away from it all. But the station-master was not forthcoming, and tickets were not to be had—so primitive is life here. He was approaching in that very train, and T. undertook to get a ticket whilst I settled down. This was a Swedish express, and there would be rather less loitering at the stations than there had been yesterday. Yet we had time enough and to spare for all that was needed. A last good-bye, the whistle sounded, the train moved on. Away to the world again, whilst T. turned back to his happy Arcadian existence.

Halmstad once more. And when, about four o'clock, I went down to watch the arrival of the boat from Gothenburg, whose face should I see on board but E's. Tired of solitude, he had taken steamer, and, in spite of the treacheries of the Cattegat, had arrived safe and sound. For six hours we explored the unexciting town, listened to the band, studied the inhabitants. Nothing original rewarded us; no great eccentricities, or startling beauties, or anything removed from the commonplace. At ten o'clock we were on board again, and the boat started for Gothenburg.

But the Cattegat, no longer in good humour, had lashed itself to fury. The vessel pitched and tossed like a cork upon the waves. Everything not fastened went flying in all directions. A terrible night, and at eight o'clock next morning we put into Gothen-

burg with feelings of rejoicing. For once we felt quite an affection for the old place, and looked upon Hauglund's as a harbour of refuge.

Not long should we remain at anchor. This was Sunday, and on Monday morning at mid-day, having duly taken our berths and paid our passage, we bade a cheerful farewell to Gothenburg, and started up the Gotha canal, en route for Stockholm.

CHAPTER V.

THE GOTHA CANAL.

ONE of the things to be done in Sweden, and certainly to be enjoyed, is the Gotha canal: upwards from Gothenburg, or downwards from Stockholm. The former route is the better, for then all the beauties of Lake Malaren come in as a final impression; whilst awaiting you are the attractions of the gay capital itself.

In the downward route, on the contrary, the scenery and interest of the canal cease before reaching Gothenburg. All enjoyment has subsided into a quiet river contemplation with flat tame shores. You feel, if it may be so described, your pleasure and spirits *unwinding*. It is like the last chapter of a sensational novel. The mystery that kept you breathless is being rapidly cleared in a very commonplace manner: you wonder why you never thought of this, that, and the other before: never guessed the first husband to be dead, and the beautiful charmer guiltless: never imagined that wardrobe had a false back

to it, opening on to a secret staircase leading to a well, into which all the murdered bodies were thrown by that terrible female murderer.

And, in the downward route, instead of the liveliness of the capital, you have only dull Gothenburg in prospect, without a single excitement to relieve the monotony of existence; whence your only escape must be an uncertain journey down the Cattegat to Copenhagen; or a still prosier passage—"unromantic as Monday morning"—across the North Sea, back to old England: a journey which means a return to everyday life and labour; getting once more into harness; a present farewell to the chances and changes, the adventures and delights of foreign travel and distant scenes.

The Gotha canal is a colossal work in the way of engineering, by means of which the Baltic is brought into communication with the North Sea. Three hundred and fifty years ago it was first thought of; but great schemes like great minds ripen slowly, and nothing important was achieved until the beginning of the eighteenth century. Again, early in the present century it was further planned and developed by Baron Von Platzen, assisted by Thomas Telford, an English engineer. In spite of much opposition from the people of Sweden, the canal was accomplished and opened about the year 1832; all improvements and additions ending in 1844.

The journey from Gothenburg to Stockholm occupies about two days and a half. The distance

is three hundred and fifty miles; about fifty miles of actual canal, and the rest made up of lakes and river. There are seventy-four locks to be passed; the canal is crossed by more than thirty bridges, and has a fall of ten feet; it is forty-six feet wide at the base, eighty at the surface, and is three hundred feet above the level of the sea at its highest point. Thus, starting at sea-level from Gothenburg, your steamer has climbed a huge staircase of locks to a height of three hundred feet; after which, it descends again by the same process to the original level, before reaching Stockholm.

Some of these locks appear like staircases built for a giant race, for in certain parts many of them are together; in one place, before reaching Trollhätta, no fewer than eleven. If you land on the banks and watch, you may see the vessel climbing up the monster steps, taking a long breathing interval between each step, while the lock behind is closed and the one in front is being gradually opened and the water levelled. So that between each lock the vessel rises ten feet in the world, evenly and beautiful as if lifted by unseen hands. Eleven such steps may be counted here, eleven long pauses; but there are no mistakes, no false alarms; there is no going backward; no stumbling or tripping to bring good luck to those who may be coming up behind.

We left Gothenburg on Monday morning and were fortunate in having the "Ceres," one of the two new steamers lately added to the line. A good many

English were on board; the one solitary and only time that we came into contact with them while going about Sweden.

For the English do not invade Sweden as they deluge other countries. It seems very little patronised by tourists. A few enterprising and inquisitive people go through it for no better reason than because they like to see everything; and because, adjoining Norway, they must realise for themselves that it has not all the charms and beauty of the land of the midnight sun; charms that creep into your heart and fasten themselves there with a grasp that never loosens. One visit to Sweden will satisfy any doubt or curiosity upon this point, and, for the most part, will leave your love for the beautiful still unsatisfied.

The English, as a rule, confine themselves to Stockholm. They make a dash from the capital of Norway to that of Sweden. Generally speaking it is a "moonlight flitting," for more often than not they take the night train.

Having explored Stockholm, its lakes and islands; wandered through the beautiful rooms and avenues of Drottningholm; attended the king's public reception in the Winter Palace; gazed upon the world from the roof of the Grand Hotel, and lunched at Hasselbacken in the Djurgärd, they straightway take steamer and proceed to immolate themselves on the Steppes of Russia; or dash back to Christiania, as if there, and there alone, happiness was to be found.

Or thirdly, and very oppositely, they take night train to Malmö, cross to Copenhagen (the Danes will be found nicer, more refined and better-looking than the Swedes), and so cunningly work their way southward into civilised Europe, cheating the North Sea of its just dues and tributes.

Yet there were days and excursions in Sweden, or near it, that we would not have been without; even as now we would not be without their recollection. The journey up the Gotha canal was one of them.

The "Ceres" left Gothenburg at mid-day, a goodly company on board of various people and tongues, a curious assemblage, composed of many elements. One lady was taking charge of an unwieldy old gentleman—a strangely contrasted pair; the one looking like a Colossus of Rhodes in everything but height, whilst the lady was of amazing stature, with a pinched, nervous face, whose original bloom had all flown to one feature. Her blue eyes were watery and restless: and when she spoke her teeth had a trick of appearing and disappearing in an original and singular manner. She had no Swedish, as the natives would say; and once or twice on appealing to me across the dinner-table for help in a difficulty, only plunged herself into greater straits, for I had no Swedish either.

Whenever she wanted anything not on the table she made signs to the stewardess, put her head on one side like a sparrow and gave a look intended to

be winsome. Such a look as Charity Pecksniff might have worn when it suited her purpose. Having stormed the citadel of the waitress's heart, a pantomime ensued; dumb motions, expressive gestures. But the stewardess refused to be charmed. She understood everything perfectly well, but was revengeful or contrary. When asked for salt, she deliberately brought sugar; when the lady made coaxing signs for bread, she handed mustard. Once when she held out her cup for more sugar, she maliciously dropped into it a lump of butter.

The old gentleman in charge was a nonentity in all matters intelligent, who devoured the piles his fair keeper heaped upon his plate, abused her if she failed him in quantity, and very much enjoyed the port wine he regularly ordered but never shared with her.

Next to him sat a different order of being. A fair lady, with golden hair and dazzling complexion, and eyes that did a great deal of execution. She disappeared mysteriously one night, and we had made up our minds that she was not human at all, but a delicious mermaid who had gone back to her native element, when she suddenly turned up again at Stockholm, in the restaurant of the Grand Hotel, taking luncheon with an earnestness which proved her, without further doubt, a child of earth. E. had been much the more smitten of the two, and not holding Lord Byron's opinion, was ready, for the rapture at the golden-haired one's reappearance, to

condone a too evident devotion to the pleasures of the table.

There was an elderly man on board, who talked without stops, must have been a prig in his young days, and was insufferable in his old. For ever laying down the law, he addressed everyone dictatorially; what he said was final as the Persian laws. He possessed largely the organ of contradiction and delighted to put himself in opposition to his neighbours.

One morning a keen east wind was blowing; the sun had gone in; for the time being the upper deck was cold as the Arctic regions.

"Lovely weather!" he remarked.

Dead silence. No one agreed.

"Ah!" he said. "Too cold for you, I suppose. Now I don't call this cold at all; it is simply bracing." His face was blue, his teeth were chattering, his coat collar was up, his shoulders were in his ears. "I suppose you'd rather have a west wind and sunshine. Now I wouldn't. Give me an east wind and a grey sky; not that everlasting glare which dazzles you, or a hot sun that grills you and gives you prickly heat and a splitting headache. No, no; none of your azure skies and west winds for me; a grey sky and an east wind and I'm all right. Ah! this is something like!" as a cutting blast made his old teeth chatter, his face bluer than ever.

Who could answer such a spirit of contradiction? Happily no answer was necessary. He would rush

on to the next subject without giving time to put in a word. He went down, and presently came up again.

"I am given to understand, sir," with a patronising put-you-down sort of air, which seemed to say: "And what business *had* you there, or *anyone* there, but me?"—"I am given to understand, sir, that you have been up to the moon and down into the depths of the earth. Now, as I have been to the one and intend to go to the other, I shall be glad to hear your experience of the whole matter. Ah! you did not enjoy the moon—now I did. Climate too variable—now I thought it very even; too much above the world and too solitary?—There, sir, I flatly disagree with you."

This is the conversation as it occurred, only that instead of the moon the disputed point was a quiet place in Italy. Finally the quarrelsome old gentleman had to be generally discarded and sent to Coventry. But he had a foil with him in the shape of a companion—masculine gender, singular number; a companion as pleasant and retiring as he was himself the opposite; with whom one compared notes and conversed pleasantly by the hour, and who added both to the enjoyment and profit of the journey.

We left Gothenburg, then, at mid-day. Shall we ever get away from it?—the sentence haunts one like the slippers in eastern fable.

On mounting to the upper deck, we felt that enjoyment was before us. At least, there would be no

more sea; it would be a calm voyage and, we hoped, a prosperous: like Mendelssohn's Symphony.

But for the present we were in the river. Gothenburg diminished, but was a long time disappearing. On either side were flat, green reaches, of which we had an extensive view from the bridge. The weather was warm and sunny—for the easterly blast above alluded to had not set in—and if there was nothing startlingly beautiful in the country, the fields, at least, were fresh, green, and pleasant to look upon. Every now and then we had to slacken speed, sometimes to stop altogether, as we met a barge that either could not or would not get out of the way in time. Some of these barges had brown sails set, some were propelled with large clumsy oars, but all were picturesque and lively objects, breaking the monotony of the river way. Most of them were laden with wood, and hailed the steamer as she went by, claiming good-fellowship with everyone on board.

Rafts, too, we occasionally met, generally in charge of a man and a woman—no doubt life partners for better for worse—each labouring at an oar. Passed, even at slowest speed, the water plashed and washed over the wood, and those on the raft would give a succession of little jumps very funny and comical; in their endeavours to escape the waves and keep dry feet, until the miniature tempest had subsided. For a time we were continually passing these barges, and slackening speed. Reeds and rushes

by the river-side bowed down and disappeared at our approach as if saluting, drawn in by the action of the steamer upon the water.

Presently we passed the castle of Bohus, once the largest castle in Sweden, and now the greatest ruin. It lies upon an island dividing the estuary of the Gotha into two channels—one running to Gothenburg the other out to sea. Opposite was the small town of Kongelf, which looked inviting from the banks of the river, but which I think we passed without stopping. The scenery about here was distinguished by a certain wildness. Rocky hills looked bare and barren; the water widened. Being the most interesting spot we had yet reached, of course the bell rang and everyone went down to dinner. Dinner, somehow, is generally announced at the wrong moment, when the best part of the scenery is going on. And to go down when the bell rang was a necessity; otherwise you lost your place, and those who trusted to a second and later detachment sometimes had to dine with Duke Humphrey.

Dinner was a long process for a small return. The stewardesses were not up to their work—or rather had more to do than they could manage, and kept you waiting so long between each course that the previous course had time to be comfortably digested. Then there was the smörgasbord to begin with, at which both English and Swedish assisted—a goodly company, for the Swedes on board were in the majority. The few who declined the smörgasbord

exercised their patience on camp stools, guarding their places; for the Swedes had no idea of not taking any vacant seat at table, whether reserved or not. Possession with them was nine points of the law: "qui va à la chasse, perd sa place," their motto. Dinner consisted of three courses, and it took considerably over an hour to get through them.

After Kongelf we continued our way up the river, the banks enlivened by country houses, factories, and other signs of life and industry. Presently we came to the first part of the canal and the first locks. By five o'clock we had reached Trollhätta, and the most celebrated falls in Sweden.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FALLS OF TROLLHATTA.

EVERYONE who wished to see the falls—and who did not?—had now to leave the vessel. Whilst they went round one way, on their visit of inspection, she would proceed, step by step, through the eleven locks. The hotel was the rallying point.

It was a pleasant break in the journey. And, indeed, throughout the trip, we were frequently able to walk along the banks, exploring the country, enjoying the shade thrown by the trees, the cool greensward beneath our feet.

So everyone left the ship for Trollhätta falls, breaking themselves up into detachments, according to numbers and inclinations.

A wild, beautiful walk, through a deep valley, under craggy and romantic rocks, from which trees overhung far up, with long arms that seemed pronouncing an eternal benediction upon the world. Great boulders lay about, immense fragments that

must have rolled down and lain there for ages. The rugged path wound and twisted about; now hilly and ascending, now leading downward over and around these fallen masses. Now in the gloom and depths of smaller groves strewn with flowers and ferns, and the small wild strawberry; and now a longer avenue, a

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stiff ascent, and groves of trees that led within sound of the rushing water. Turning to the left, and walking to the edge of the chasm, a view of the splendid falls at once burst upon us.

An immense mass of rushing, swirling, seething foam, twisted into many shapes and designs by great rocks and miniature islands rising from its very centre.

The falls are not high and perpendicular, as are most of the celebrated falls of the world; but they are of tremendous extent and amazing rapidity, whilst the body of water is probably the largest of any fall in Europe. Their situation, too, is very romantic. It was the wildest spot we had seen in Sweden. Cliffs towered to a great height, barren, broken, and rugged; here showing a surface of cold grey stone, there lichen and moss-covered, with the hue of centuries upon it; now fringed with fir trees, often to the very edge of the water.

Looking upwards from below the falls, you see factories and ironworks and tall chimneys perched by the side, washed—almost surrounded—by the rushing water. But these do not take from its effect. Rather they increase it, by adding life to the scene, whilst their black walls give it tone, standing out in contrast with the white foam. The falls are six in number; their total height is over 188 feet, their length from first to last about 160 yards.

E. and I soon found ourselves climbing the heights looking down upon this valley of waters. It was magnificent beyond all description, its influence upon the mind exceeding that of all the waterfalls we had ever seen.

We had visited the chief waterfalls in Norway: some are beautiful, and others are grand and imposing; but none of them excited the breathless sensation that comes over you while gazing upon the Falls of Trollhätta. It was perpetual motion, inexhaustible

supply. A few have attempted to ford them, but none ever survived to tell the tale of their folly. Yet at the hotel they showed us a dog that once tumbled in from the top, had been hurried through the rapids

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and torrents, and had come out stupid and breathless, but uninjured. A large, black, fat, superannuated retriever, ending his days in the lazy happiness and indulgence of unconscious heroism.

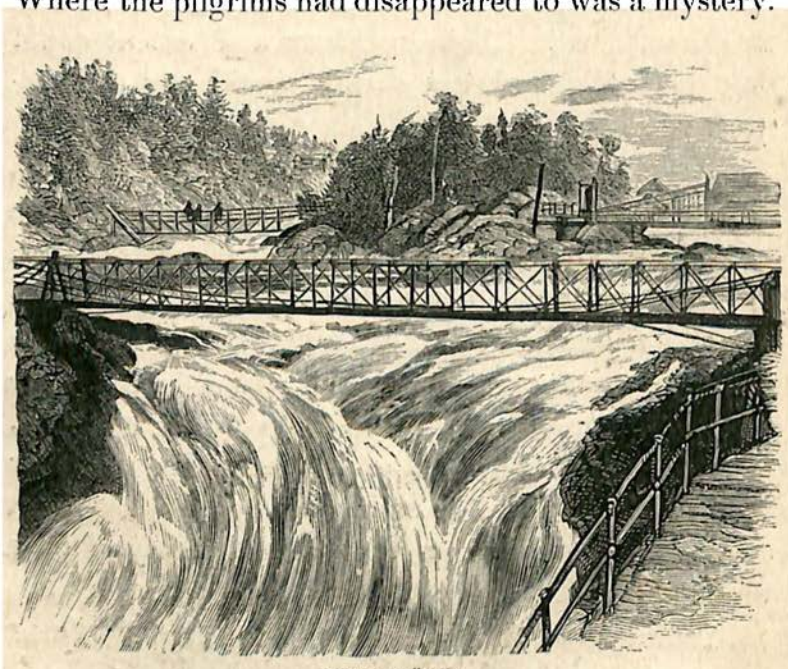
From our height, far above the falls, we gazed

upon yet greater heights above and before us. On the summit of what looked like an extensive plateau, a large white church was strangely conspicuous against a background of clear blue sky. To the right, falls and valley descended and disappeared in precipitous depths. One felt that this ought to be a place of abode for many days. A passing gaze at the falls was insufficient. Their grandeur and extent could only be realised after a certain familiarity and acquaintance.

We stayed on, doing our best to absorb it all, until we thought time must be up. The falls were magnificent, but we had no wish to lose the boat. For long we seemed to have been the last of the "band of pilgrims"—whether happy or not, each could only answer unto himself. We do not wear our hearts upon our sleeves. So we went down, piloted by a small guide, who, whether we would or no, had appropriated us as his own special perquisite, and in whose assurances that we had plenty of time we put no faith.

Yet he proved himself "trustie to the end." Once more on a level with the rushing water, looking upon the torrent from the very edge of great boulders, it threw out its spray in too affectionate and boisterous a manner. We crossed the bridge, went round by the forge, and lost sight of the falls with a sigh. Like Oliver Twist, we longed for more. When we came in view of the hotel, there was neither sound nor symptom of the "Ceres."

A goodly-sized inn. The big, black dog-hero of Trollhätta, lying in front of the door, greeted us with a lazy wag of the tail and a blink of his sleepy eyes. As the little guide had said, we had plenty of time before us. Those eleven locks were not to be passed in a hurry. There was no fear of being left behind. Where the pilgrims had disappeared to was a mystery.



TROLLHÄTTA.

Not one of them was visible, except Golden-hair, attended by two devoted cavaliers, who each looked as if he could cheerfully dynamite the other. Golden-hair was dramatically declaiming in the hotel garden, recounting the effect of the falls upon her imagination.

We left them to it, went in and found a large upper room, with a soft-toned piano and other evi-

dences of civilisation. They brought us coffee—and there is hardly any coffee in the world like the Swedish. It is always good ; generally superlative. We lounged at the open window, slowly consumed our nectar, watched the even tenour of village life. Our little guide was surrounded by a small army of boys He was just now in clover ; the world had prospered with him ; his companions were full of friendship and affection. The pilgrims were coming up as they had left in detachments.

Presently a whistle ; a commotion ; the eleven locks were behind the "Ceres"; our moments in Tröllhätta were numbered. Down we went. The old dog condescended to get up and lazily watch us off the premises. He was almost too fat to walk. Notoriety had spoilt him. It is easier to win laurels than to wear them. A tumble into the falls now would have been fatal, ending in tragedy.

The boat came alongside. The pilgrims went on board, headed by Golden-hair and her devoted slaves. If they did not spread their mantles for her to walk upon, it was that mantles were missing, not that they did not think her adorable and queenly. Other pilgrims followed up the gangway with dignity, and others again scrambled over the sides, "sans cérémonie." All were there. For once there was no waiting for stragglers ; romantic couples who take account of nothing but their own hearts' emotions. In good time the "Ceres" went on her way rejoicing. Went her way on the calm waters of the canal,

between green banks and bowing reeds and rushes. Roadways were beyond, small houses or farms, cherry orchards groaning with fruit. It was so tantalising that, like the fox, everyone declared the fruit was not ripe. But if redness was sign of maturity, that opinion was a hollow mockery. "O ruddier than the cherry" was never written in a Swedish orchard ripening to harvest.

Wherever we stopped—and we stopped frequently—the country people came down with cherries, strawberries and raspberries: the former most plentiful and most popular. Large baskets brimful of rich, luscious fruit. Almost everyone on board, but especially the Swedish ladies, invested in unlimited quantities, handed up in paper bags like inverted pyramids, running over with good measure. When the bags failed, handkerchiefs came to the rescue. Then these refined Swedish ladies—everyone talks so much of the refinement of the Swedes as compared with the Norwegians—proceeded to dispose of their purchases, threw their stones freely about the deck, where if they became so many traps for spinal-concussion and fractured skulls, it was, as Mr. Toots would have said, of no consequence. Long before the end of the journey we had had quite enough of the Swedish ladies: and, for the matter of that, of the Swedish men also. But these specimens were the ordinary type. The exceptional Swedes, when we met them, were charming and delightful.

After leaving Trollhätta and devoting an hour to

the melancholy pleasures of the supper table, twilight fell upon the earth, and then darkness. A darkness which toned and subdued everything, yet in which near objects were quite visible. The distant landscape was clothed with a black pall. Lights gleamed in roadside cottages, and here and there an open doorway disclosed the bright embers of a peat fire smouldering upon a hearth. Disclosed sometimes the outlines of a Darby and Joan quietly watching these embers, and suggesting all sorts of possible domestic dramas, in the most simple of which so often lie hidden all the elements of tragedy. Trees fringing the highway cast long shadows upon our watery path, while they rustled mysteriously in the night wind. Stars, bright and splendid, found their reflections multiplied and broken up into gleams and flashes in the troubled waters of our wake.

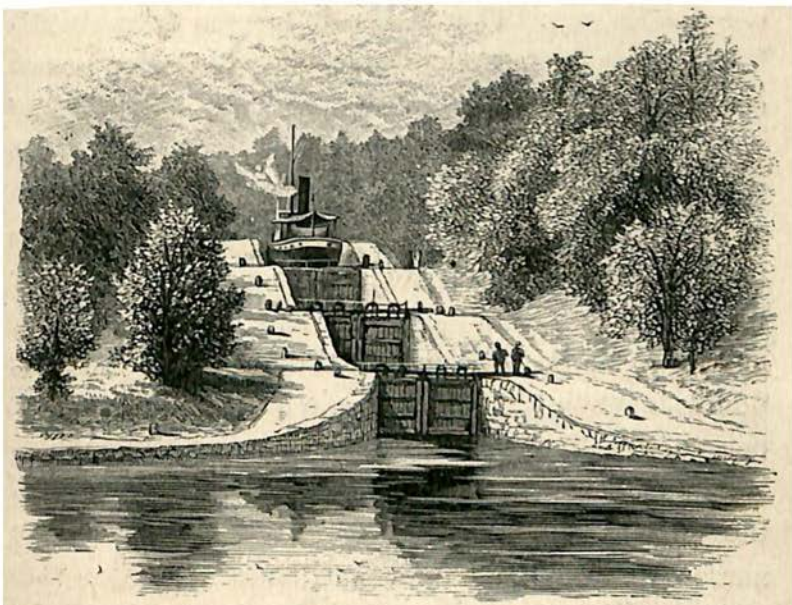
Everyone had long gone down, and E. and I had the deck to ourselves. Even the dictatorial old gentleman had turned in, after declaring that this was just the sort of country he liked: that for his part he didn't believe Norway was a bit better than Sweden: and that, àpropos of the stupid stars up there, with their blinking eyes, he didn't believe a word of the fable about Galileo; had always doubted the old man's existence. "Nothing lies like history and tradition," said he; "and if you applied the rules of contrary to everything you read and heard, the chances were you might sometimes come upon a little truth."

About ten o'clock we touched at Venersborg, a small, flourishing town, substantial and well-built, with a wide, business-like quay. The steamers run quite as much for commercial purposes as for pleasure, and here cargo was discharged and taken on board, a few passengers left and others took their place. Lighted up, the place looked bright and cheerful in all the surrounding darkness.

Weird and singular was the feeling when, on leaving Venersborg, we plunged at once into the black waste of the waters of Lake Wenern. Strange the effect of being surrounded by land and houses one moment, and plunging the next into an inland sea, where, under cover of the darkness, we might have been a thousand miles distant from all life and human habitation. The steamer plunged and throbbed on her way. Islands upreared themselves, black, solitary, and gloomy in the darkness, beautiful and romantic by day. How much we regretted that darkness. But the steamers travel night and day unceasing. Yet navigation is often so difficult, that to traverse some portions by night seems almost like throwing a chance of life away ; and there are a very few spots that can only be taken in daylight.

Strange and novel was the sensation of crossing this lake at midnight, no lights about but our own, and the reflections of the stars upon the water ; nothing to break or startle the solemn stillness but the cry of some bird disturbed by our passage, escaping from one little island to another.

It was growing cold. Everyone had long ago succumbed to sleep. Even the contradictory old gentleman—who ought to have been on deck, lively as a cricket, and enjoying the night air—had turned in, as we have seen; and being a lover of Arctic regions and east winds, no doubt was comfortably



GOING THROUGH THE LOCKS.

snoring—I am sure he snored—rolled up in a dozen blankets, door closed, curtain drawn, scuttle screwed up tight. But there comes an end to all things: the longest day, the most troubled life, all the burden of sorrow: and there comes a moment when the lids grow heavy, and the steps flag, and we too must turn in for a long, last sleep.

Next morning found the steamer still on her way, but far from her destination. It was only Tuesday, and Stockholm would not be reached before Wednesday evening.

All day long the journey was interesting and beautiful. Now steaming up between banks so narrow that one wondered what would be done if two vessels met. They never do meet in these straits. Where they cannot see ahead they whistle and rouse echoes in the neighbourhood, and the one steamer waits in a sufficiently wide part until the other has gone by.

We called at many places during the day, discharging small cargo, exchanging passengers. Our numbers never seemed to decrease, but rather the contrary. Now we passed through locks, single, double, sometimes four or five in number; permitting one to land and enjoy long walks on the banks, which added so much to the charm and pleasure of the journey; and now we launched forth from the narrow canal into the open freedom of the lake.

Lake Wettern was especially lovely, and its banks were not destitute of towns and villages, and other signs of life. Most interesting from a distance—for we did not go out of our way to call there—was Vadstena: ancient looking and dignified, reposing on its quiet slopes. Here, too, was the ancient monastery of St. Brigitta, founded in the fourteenth century, now unromantically turned into a lunatic asylum. Many wished to stop here, but the steamer was

inexorable. At Motala she did call; but the place, famous for ironworks and factories, was as prosy in its associations and surroundings as Vadstena was romantic. Yet, like the famous city of Lisbon, lovely from the water, commonplace in itself, perhaps

ON THE BANKS OF THE GOTHA CANAL.

distance also lent enchantment to the charms of Vadstena. We consoled ourselves with the thought.

One portion of the canal—lying between Lake Wettern and Lake Roxen—was perhaps the most beautiful of all. The water was above the level of the land, and we looked down upon a road overshadowed by trees, with a charming country beyond. Fertile gardens adorned with profusions of flowers of

rich colour, scented the air we passed through. There were velvety lawns and park-like grounds, and orchards laden with cherry trees. We had found nothing prettier of its kind; nothing that looked so much like a delicious bit of England transplanted to the middle of Sweden, flourishing under northern skies. Everyone went into a series of crescendo harmonies of rapture, which the Swedish ladies turned into *ff* discords as they were wafted out of reach of those tantalising cherry orchards. On some portions of our journey the woods were magnificent; trees stretched far as the eye could reach, many of them oaks of splendid growth.

When night had fallen we reached a spot where seven locks had to be passed, giving time for a walk under the stars. Few were enterprising enough to leave the vessel. Tall trees lined the roadside. We went down the rapidly-descending pathway, leaving the steamer behind us. She looked weird and monstrous in the surrounding darkness, yet cheerful with all her side lights, and mast lights, and cabin lights—red, green and white—flashing out in the blackness of night. And watching, every now and then, as one lock was closed and another opened, one saw her gradually descending as by some mysterious process, ten feet in the world; then moving on to the next lock, and there stationary again for a time.

We came to the end of the road, and apparently, to the end of all things. A tiny pier and a miniature lighthouse, from which flashed a beacon over the

silent waters of Lake Roxen; not a creature in sight, not a sound to be heard, not a nightbird to cleave the air with startling cry. Isolated, infinitely sad and solitary, looked the lake, its near waters dimly lighted by the lamp in that small lighthouse.

We turned away almost with a shudder. Far ahead of us, a mile above the earth as it seemed in the darkness, was that flashing, throbbing steamer, coming down the series of locks, with solemn steps and slow. We went back and sat upon the middle of the last lock of all, and watched the black water below us rising. The further gates opened; she passed through, a thing of life, and slowly bore down to within a foot of our heads. It required some nerve to keep one's seat in all that mysterious gloom. Suppose the engines failed to answer at the right moment? Crash and chaos to the gates, and everything and everyone about them—whilst the unconscious mass swept out into Lake Roxen as if nothing had happened.

Nothing did happen. She stopped at the right moment, and we took advantage of our last chance of getting on board. Not many minutes after, she passed through the last lock, and launched on to the lake. Soon nothing was left to tell the tale of what had been but a gleam from that little lighthouse, which gradually flashed more and more starlike in the darkness.

So once more from the broad waters of a lake we bade good-night to the world.

Our last day dawned. After all, we should not be sorry to reach Stockholm. Three days, pleasant and enjoyable as they were, singular and uncommon though the experience, yet sufficed. Had the voyage lasted a week, I think we should have got out somewhere and finished the journey by train: as Goldenhair must have done, or she never could have reappeared in all her splendour at Stockholm, destroying lovely and romantic illusions, and proving herself mortal after all.

But the last day was not the least pleasant; with the exception of that part where, launching out for a time into the Baltic, there was nothing to arrest attention. Before entering the wider waters, the arm running up to Norrköping had been singularly beautiful. Romantic banks and small islands all clothed with so rich a verdure and so well-wooded, that the scene, as we glided along, was that of an earthly paradise. In the Baltic there was a distinct swell upon the water which caused a good many to turn suddenly quiet, and others to disappear altogether. It did not last many hours. We left the wider waters and passed up into the arm leading to Södertelje.

Here, just before entering the last portion of the canal, we all but met with an adventure. As nearly as possible the vessel ran aground, and only saved herself by performing a series of evolutions which lasted about half an hour, and brought her again into deep waters. All this had not been quite lost time. We were at the mouth of the narrow canal leading

up to Södertelje, and a steamer out of sight, but not out of sound, had been using her whistle to good purpose and warning us of rocks ahead. Endeavouring to keep clear of one danger, we had nearly fallen into another.

The short canal was one of the most interesting bits of the journey. Banks, sylvan and wooded with slender, beautiful trees, were adorned with wild flowers. The canal was so narrow there seemed scarcely an inch of room to spare, and one could easily have jumped from the vessel to the flower-gemmed shore, which sloped far above our heads.

Then came Södertelje, an ancient, flourishing town, and a much frequented bathing-place. Old women crowded the sides with baskets of twisted cakes, which we tried, because the guide-books recommended them as simply ambrosia. And trying them, we straightway repented. The eagerness with which they were bought was the more perplexing. The town seemed to promise well as a place of sojourn. Ahead of us, high in the air, was the railway bridge, which presently swung round to allow us to pass.

Soon after, we turned into Lake Malaren. The interest of the journey, as far as the actual canal was concerned, was over. The lake itself has infinite beauties, but to-day they were not apparent. The sun had gone in, a bitterly cold wind was blowing, occasionally a little rain fell. The old gentleman who went through life by the rules of contrary, a fur cap

well over his ears, his hands in woollen gloves plunged in the pockets of a capacious great coat, a thick rug over his shoulders, was stamping about and vowing that this was splendid; far better than all the sunshine and west winds and southern climates that ever visited this earth.

Under the circumstances the lake seemed interminable. Hour after hour passed and Stockholm did not appear. At length a vision as of a great town: church steeples; heights where houses did duty for trees; and we saw the beginning of the end. Nearer and nearer grew the vision. Bridges and palaces opened up: a distant sound as of a surging multitude, the busy hum of human bees in a hive: a crowd of vessels in all directions: quays that appeared to run up into the very centre of the town, a medley of curves and angles and straight lines: a number of people that seemed amazing and confusing after our late experience: a skilful piloting through steamers darting about in all directions, amongst vessels outward and homeward bound: a dazzling array of flags flying and flapping in the wind: a confused clashing of church clocks striking the hour of six: a consignment of goods and chattels to the watchful messenger from the Grand Hotel: and ourselves, with undisguised pleasure, treading the streets of this Venice of the North.

CHAPTER VII.

STOCKHOLM.

THE Venice of the North. A very pretty title, suggesting everything that is beautiful and romantic. Gondolas flashing about in summer twilight; serenades wafted across still waters; lovely women reclining on voluptuous cushions, listening to whispered vows. In no sense of the word and in no aspect does Stockholm answer to this description. In vain will you look for a Bridge of Sighs, a Palace of the Doges, or a St. Mark's Square.

At a first glance, indeed, Stockholm, apart from its quays, appears a very ordinary city, with narrow streets, houses stiff, gloomy and modern, and second-rate shops. So far it might be a small Paris or Vienna, without the attractions of either. It seems full of strange turnings and angles which often bring you unexpectedly back to the point from which you started. There are squares that are not quadrangular and streets that are not straight, but are

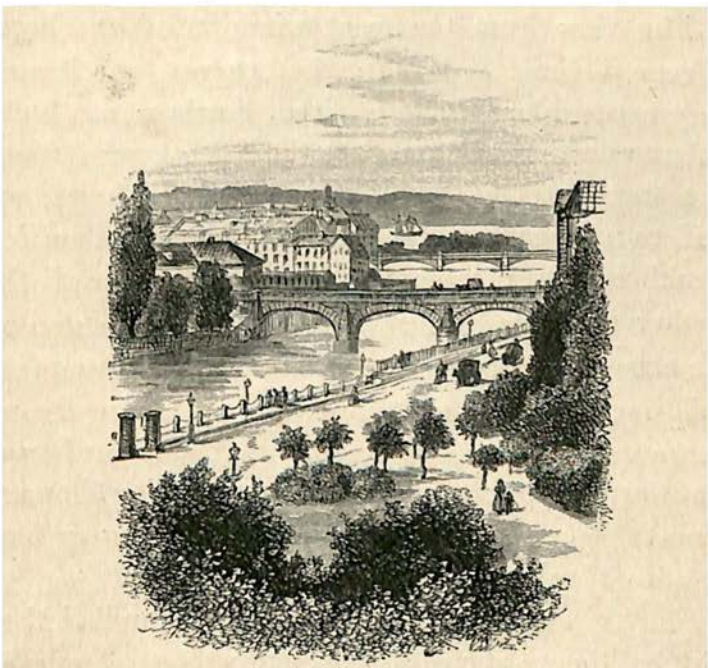
sometimes very hilly. Whence, then, its great renown?

Only after closer acquaintance is the fact discovered that Stockholm gains upon the affections, and possesses one of those rare natures towards whom familiarity breeds, not contempt, but admiration.

Even the Grand Hotel vexes the spirit, as a mystery possessing unlimited command of back rooms, but apparently no frontage. Unless firm in declaring that a front room and a large supply of air are necessaries of life, you will be consigned to regions dull and dispiriting, overlooking a narrow yard full of echoes, where creaking pump-handles have discovered the secret of perpetual motion, and shouting, running, and grooming never cease. As a climax to this pandemonium, an occasional barrel-organ strays in, and sets up unearthly wailings that no pandemonium ever yet rivalled. In the first moment you are half paralysed; the second sees you flying to the end of the earth in search of peace.

As to position, the hotel has everything in its favour, and, so far, is the one hotel in Stockholm. None ever dream of going elsewhere, except those Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians who visit it more for business than pleasure. For these there are smaller and no doubt equally comfortable inns, where you may be something more than a mere number, with a Penal Servitude flavour about it, and are not referred to the porter upon every occasion for every sort of information.

Certainly the porter of the Grand Hotel, in brass-buttons and gold-laced cap, looked a personage in himself, was a walking Encyclopædia and Bradshaw, had all languages at his command, was accurate in all statements. In a word, he was reliable; but was so much in request that his window was generally



STOCKHOLM.

like the box-office of a popular theatre, where, as the French would say, people "make tail," and each takes his turn. It was more difficult to obtain audience of him than of the king's majesty.

The very passages of the hotel are distinguished by names, like the thoroughfares of the town. You, perhaps, are living in room 21, corridor London

Street, and accidentally come upon a friend who begs you to look in upon him in room 45, corridor Christiania Street. Your valet or factotum—if travelling with such an impediment—has been consigned to No. 3,000 New York Street, and is never accessible under half an hour's notice.

The view from the front windows of the hotel is very difficult to equal. Before you the broad quay gives place to the river, flowing into Lake Malaren on the one hand, into the Baltic on the other. The fine sheet of water is spanned by handsome bridges connecting the different islands of which Stockholm is composed. On the banks of the further quay, its base almost washed by the stream, the palace rears its head: an immense quadrangular building, dignified and imposing, containing many treasures. It seems to keep watch and ward over the town, a great crowd of surrounding houses; almost places itself in rivalry with towers and steeples of neighbouring churches.

Hills rise above and beyond the town, well clothed with buildings; ancient tenements perched on granite heights, singular and romantic; full of "tone" for the æsthetic and "effect" for the artist. These are elevated above all palaces and towers.

Most interesting is the wide river itself. In some instances—from the hotel windows, for example—no vessels will be seen round that curve, but a crowd of masts will tell you that there ships are moored, loading and unloading, bound for all parts of the

world. On the water before you steamers dart and flash about in all directions, like arrows from a bow, appearing and disappearing; now making for one landing-stage, now for another; discharging a stream of passengers, receiving others; waiting a few moments, sounding a bell, darting off again, with

PALACE, STOCKHOLM.

flags fluttering. Many of these steamers are mere launches, running between Stockholm and one or other of its countless suburbs or neighbouring isles.

At night—especially Sunday night—the scene is still more animated and unrivalled. Quays brilliantly illuminated, the electric light shining out in dazzling contrast with the weaker vessel of the gas-lamp.

If the king is not in residence, the palace is dark and closed, but its countless windows reflect all the surrounding lights in tongues of flame, until you might fancy the whole building on fire. The old houses on those rocky and more distant heights also reflect a myriad gleams. Every window seems an illumination. From pleasure gardens on yonder hill, rockets shoot up and break into a thousand many-coloured balls, dying out like meteors in the darkness. Other fireworks blaze up for a moment, and in their turn expire. For it is Sunday night, and the Swedes are at their favourite amusement.

The water is a scene of flashing lamps, green, red and white. Too dark to see the steamers, you trace their courses by these lights; courses so silent that the gleams seem to possess an independent existence. Gigantic fire-flies, will-o'-the-wisps, flitting over the winding surface of the water. A land of enchantment, beautiful and interesting, best seen and most enjoyed from one of the upper windows of the Grand Hotel. This alone is worth a visit to Stockholm, and would tempt you some day to repeat it. Windows open to the dark blue summer sky, the intense heat and glare of the day followed by a restful darkness and refreshing breeze, you may sit and gaze and muse for hours and never tire. The scene has neither weariness nor monotony.

Before the hotel, on the other side the water, under the very shadow of the palace, are pleasure gardens, with sufficient illumination to keep your

footsteps from stumbling, and permit enraptured mortals to gaze tenderly into each other's eyes. Here crowds sit in the evening, sipping harmless beverages at small round tables, under bowery branches, on a level with the river, watching the lights of the boats darting to and fro, and listening to the music of an orchestra composed of boys.

MUSEUM, WITH GRAND HOTEL IN BACKGROUND, STOCKHOLM.

These strains are sufficiently distant not to disturb your meditations and enjoyment of the surrounding scenes. As to the gardens themselves, distance lends them enchantment. A closer acquaintance shows up their atmosphere as frivolous. Curiosity is quickly satisfied, and you are glad to escape.

Frivolous must be the verdict upon most of the amusements of Stockholm and many of the people. Such at least was the impression made upon us, who, as strangers, looked upon everything from an outside point of view. We searched in vain for something solid, or intellectual and elevating, or even simply amusing.

As a religious city, it stands far down the list, and seeing how Sunday is spent there, the reputation is perhaps merited. The day seems devoted to pleasure, which ceases to be rational—as far as the "people" are concerned. This does not appear so much in the town itself, which, quiet and orderly, with closed shops and half-deserted streets, has nothing to offend. But without the town is Djurgarten, a district or park given up to every kind of amusement; an unfashionable Vanity Fair. Shows and booths, marionettes, circuses—the usual complement. Restaurants without number, some on rising ground, overlook the surrounding neighbourhood, and, for the trouble of mounting a small picturesque tower, a splendid view of land and water will be the reward. Some of the restaurants have gardens, in which the quieter and more decent portion of the community sit under the evening sky and listen to the band.

Beyond all this, round the broad road, is a more secluded part; a wild rocky-looking park, finely wooded, adorned with a statue of Bellman, the Burns of Sweden. Near it is his favourite oak, under which he often reclined, thinking out and jotting down his

verses. Here, day after day, year after year, he might be found; a man of humble birth, yet the friend of kings.

Winding round at the foot of the hill on which stands Hasselbacken, most famous restaurant in or near Stockholm, you are delighted by grassy slopes and shady avenues. Villas hide themselves in charmed groves, lovely views of the Baltic and Stockholm are disclosed. On a week-day, when all is quiet and orderly, Djurgard is very pleasant. You are surprised at so much apparently natural wildness so near the capital. All theatres and places of amusement are out of sight on the other side; no one disturbs your solitude.

But it is very different on Sundays; very different the Sunday we visited it, like Miss Rosa Dartle, for the sake of information.

All day, at short intervals, boats had been running to Djurgard from the landing-stages in front of the hotel. Boats, for that matter, had been running everywhere, starting for neighbouring islands as early as eight or nine o'clock, loaded with excursionists, packed, standing, closely as herrings in a barrel. Brass bands sent forth exhilarating discords under a gorgeous array of flags distributed rainbow fashion. Not less gay and lively the excursionists, as they disappeared amidst the inevitable display of handkerchiefs.

All the afternoon and evening the small steamboats running to Djurgard were crowded with

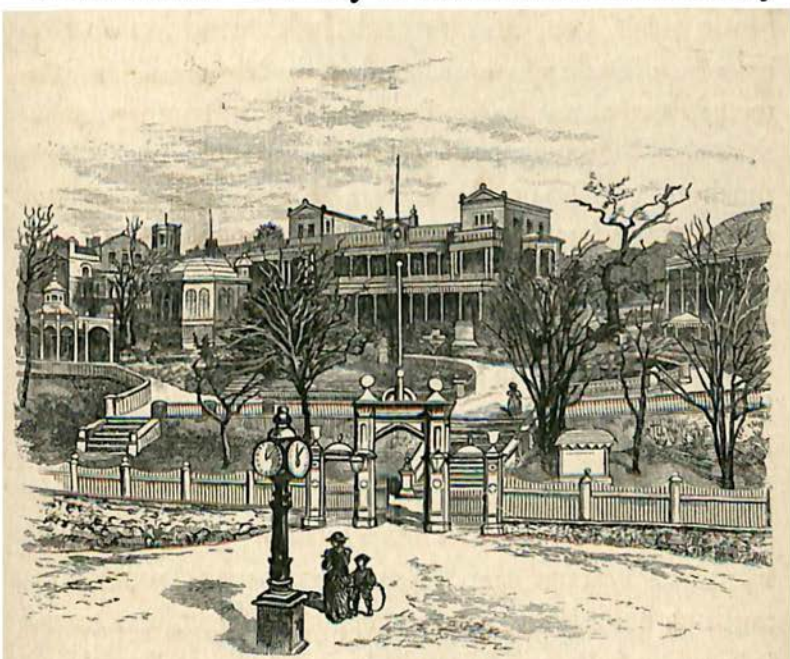
passengers; and presently we also, wondering what sort of an experience it would be, followed the multitude.

Twilight had fallen, and the neighbourhood was in course of illumination. So dense the crowd, not all Stockholm, but half Sweden seemed there. The roads were thronged. Boys and men went about with rattles, dispensing their agreeable favours upon the unsuspicious. "Nothing happens like the unexpected." The roadside cafés were crowded with drinkers. Bands of men, arm in arm, reeled about. Disorganisation and riot seemed the order of the day —or rather of the night. Such a scene on a Sunday was surely never found elsewhere. It was pandemonium. The often-quoted levity of the French was nothing to it. The most thoughtless spectator might have felt saddened. Open conveyances with double freights tried to steer a way through the reckless multitude. Heavy tramcars, laden with pleasure-seekers, scattered the crowd right and left. And still they came. Boats, carriages, tramcars, all poured in their contributions. The supply was endless.

Hasselbacken was also crowded, but with a crowd orderly and unobjectionable. There was not a vacant seat in the large gardens, brilliant with rows and clusters, pyramids and festoons of lamps. From the restaurant came sounds of billiard balls, and floods of light showed up a restless, moving multitude. From the roadway, between the pauses of the band, came the riot and noise of that other crowd,

shouting, singing, whistling ; drivers remonstrating as every moment they escaped half a dozen incapables. The heavy rolling of the cars crowned the uproar.

This goes on Sunday after Sunday, "till pale concluding winter comes at last and shuts the scene." What follows? Do they make Stockholm itself lively



HASSELBACKEN.

with midnight orgies? Do the different cafés become uproarious and crowded, as now they were crowded on week-days? But winter is the season at Stockholm, and the theatres are no doubt a rallying-point.

In summer, everyone who can do so escapes to green pastures. Those who own country places go "into residence." It is easy for many of the middle

classes to have such retreats within a short distance of the capital: on the mainland or on one of the islands with which the waters abound. Large comfortable wooden houses, gay as colours can make them, are quickly built, at no great cost.

Very picturesque are many of these places. The house itself, cool and cheerful, with windows shaded by vérandahs and porticoes hospitably open, is protected on three sides by trees admitting you to sheltered avenues and quiet walks. Within a few yards of the house the waters of the lake plash and surge and sometimes dash up in angry waves. Small bathing-houses enable you to take an early dip in the water, or indulge in a long swim. In fine weather the people row and steam about the endless lake, fish, and pay each other visits on the water, organise picnics to lovely solitudes and shady woods, live an altogether pleasant and healthful life. There is greater freedom about it than is found in any English life of similar condition. Here they pass their summers, and one envies them the privilege. These inexhaustible retreats, beautiful and charming, are all within a short distance of their winter home. They may take a morning steamer, visit their town houses, plunge into the ladies' paradise of shopping, and return for the mid-day meal. Once back, so great the change and solitude, so sylvan the retreat, a sail up the Gulf of Bothnia, or retirement to Finland or the North Cape, would scarcely make them more secluded, whilst they certainly would be less happy and civilised.

Such influences ought to make a sensible impression upon mind and tone; though, after all, impressions with the greater number are as the sandmarks that change or pass away with every succeeding tide. And, perhaps, what seems light and frivolous to us does not appear so to them. Habit becomes second nature. We can only understand Shakespeare by the Shakespeare that is within us. He who aims only at a tree will never reach the sky. Autres peuples, autres mœurs. If the quotation is slightly varied, it adapts itself all the better to the situation. It is useless to talk of colour to the blind, of harmonies to the deaf, of the pleasures of motion to the paralysed, of benevolence to the miser, of aspirations to the unholy.

The town cafés are neglected in summer. Sunday evenings have their revenge in the days of the week. Besides the boys' orchestra near the palace, there are town bands which play in the squares or gardens, and one of them was the best of the many we heard in Sweden. It was pleasant to escape from the crowd of loungers and multitude of small tables into the quieter walks of Charles XII. Square. Here, amid the trees and flower-beds, the band lent a charm to the twilight hours with its wild, well-played Swedish airs and overtures, whilst an occasional selection from Wagner raised his admirers to the paradise of music.

But, on the whole, the music and amusements of Stockholm were light and trifling, like so many of its people. These appear to possess all the lightness of the French, without the wit and sparkle which in a

manner seems to redeem the Parisian from frivolity. From the Swedish you look for some of the coldness of a northern temperament, much solidity of character and earnestness of purpose. All this they have possessed, as the history of Sweden and the part she has sometimes played in the world abundantly proves. Very much of the present type was imported by that Gustavus who, spending his early life in France, when he came to the throne introduced into his own country the traits of that feather-headed but pleasant people. But types, like old trees, do not always bear transplanting, and so Gustavus made of his people a singular combination, unsatisfactory as sparrows in eagles' nests.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON LAKE MALAREN.

BUT there is another side to the picture. Stockholm has a great deal that is strangely pleasant and interesting. Quays full of industry, running up into the very heart of the town, form a scene not found elsewhere. Here congregate a multitude of steamers and other vessels navigating to the islands of the Baltic, round the southern coast, northwards up the Gulf of Bothnia, and across to St. Petersburg; many to England and more distant shores.

At all hours these quays, washed by the waters of the Baltic, are full of life. Passengers for ever going to and fro; innumerable vessels threading their way through a mass of shipping to moorings along, side; others, outward bound, slipping their cables. A forest of masts in constant motion; bells ringing from all quarters; officers, nervous and energetic, doing their best to steer clear of collision. A blue

sky over all, and probably a fresh breeze blowing. All down the quays vessels moored after their fashion—bows quayward, stern outward ; an arrangement giving an immense number of ships each its own small share of landing.

On your way to some of these quays you pass through the fruit market, and are very self-controlled if you resist its temptations. All fruits, ripe and luscious, are displayed in abundance. Surely these are not northern latitudes, but the warm lands of the south? The display is worthy of Spain or Italy. Not least attractive are some of the pretty women who stand and serve. Glances from soft blue eyes, smiles showing perfect teeth, handkerchiefs cunningly disposed about head and shoulders, allure one to excesses in the way of purchase. And if they put on a few extra öre in honour of your English manhood (one must pay for one's privileges as well as for one's pleasures), as you know quite well they do, and as they know that you know, there is consolation in being taken in with eyes wide open.

One day we so wandered through the market on our way to the Riddarholm, where you may embark for any part of the world, and we were about to embark for Drottningholm, a summer palace of the king. Whether the eyes of some of the women—soft and bright as a gazelle's—or their tempting fruits formed the greater loadstone, it would be hard to say. In our case, both had to be resisted. The pitiless clock of the Riddarholms church—mausoleum of the

kings of Sweden—struck the fatal hour, and with hurried steps, that would have been lingering and slow as those of Adam and Eve leaving Paradise, we caught the steamer as the gangway was being withdrawn. But a good time was coming. The market was stationary, and we were not bound to Drottningholm for ever.

These excursions, the great attraction of Stockholm, are numerous as they are charming. The islands stretching away into the Baltic, or up into the waters of Lake Malaren, are said to be not less than 1,300. Some of them merely represent a few yards of wild and wooded surface—Elysium for a summer picnic; others increase to a formidable size, and give their owners a comfortable feeling of Possession. It would take months to explore the beauties of this lake alone. Months of an ideal existence amidst a luxury of wood, and water, and islands: water often as calm and blue as the summer sky, and islands a romantic vision of wild rocks and undergrowth, ferns and forest flowers: experiences none can realise who have never visited them: fresh scenes for exploration day after day, week after week, in endless extent.

Never had Stockholm looked so picturesque as we steered cleverly out of the maze of vessels and went down the river. To our left were rocky heights, and deep red houses harmonised with the green trees about them. The waters branched off into thickly-wooded creeks; small islands were in all

directions ; wooded shores never ceased to accompany us.

A sharp curve to the right brought into view the broad, white, somewhat imposing frontage of Drottningholm—perfection of a summer retreat, standing on a large island belonging to the king. One can imagine the rest to mind and spirit found here in

DROTTNINGHOLM.

exchange for the town palace, the fatigues of receptions, the restraints of social life, the cares of State, that, in Sweden, are of no light order.

The palace lies at the head of a secluded arm of the lake. Before the windows is a small landing-stage, where, to-day, a couple of boats and a steam launch were waiting, ready manned. Our steamer's

moorings were not many yards away. Large, waving trees were about the house, long avenues, ancient and splendid, stretched far down behind the palace. The grounds were laid out in the old French style, with somewhat stiff lines, reminding one of Versailles without its terraces.

These were open to visitors, and also a portion of the palace. Rooms large and noble, chiefly interesting for modern portraits of monarchs, past and present, of many lands. Amongst these was a charming portrait of Queen Victoria in the early days of her reign, facing one of the Prince Consort: the latter, the handsomest face in the room. A smaller room was devoted to female portraits, and most regal was Eugénie, Empress of the French; most charming, Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria.

One could have lingered long, for rooms and portraits were of great interest, and the attendant left you to wander at will. But time passed, and one had to leave the pomp and splendour of an ideal world for realities. For these rooms, thrown open at stated times, with no trace of habitation about them, echoing to the footsteps of a few silent gazers, always seem to belong to an existence that is only ideal and imaginary.

We exchanged art for nature in those long avenues with their ancient and noble trees. The sun chequered the broad deserted walks with deep shadows. Wandering about in great peace and contentment, the palace clock presently struck the hour

of departure, and the steamer took up the warning with shrill whistle.

On board we found a quiet part of the vessel, least likely to be invaded; but in a few moments a party of six or eight Americans came down upon us like an avalanche, with a great sense of possession. Taking us for Swedes, or altogether ignoring our existence, they plunged into a very entertaining conversation. They were Americans in every sense, who had been doing the Grand Tour, seeing as much in two months as an ordinary mortal would accomplish in six: mixed up capitals, compared notes, brought up reminiscences, fell into deep waters and fell out again; transplanted the Munich galleries to Florence, and finally recorded how their lights went out and they lost themselves in the Roman catacombs. They were very self-satisfied, and occasionally reproached each other with "copying English" in tones which declared that further reproach could not be uttered.

Arrived at our destination, we saw them depart, apparently straight for the Grand Hotel; whilst we, wrapt in a vision of cherries, seen that morning on the way to the steamer, turned in an opposite direction towards the market.

The fruit was there, just as it had appeared some hours ago, with cherries in large supply. The tempters—those Eves of the market—waited for the tempted in goodly array. A glance round, such as a thief might give at the critical moment, or a fox when

he has marked his particular fat goose. Fortune favours the brave. We were unobserved, might venture upon an extra supply, and revel in it whilst strolling up and down the banks of the canal between the bridges: a spot ever after known to us as Cherry Walk.

The innocent eyes of the woman looked straight into ours as she doubled the ordinary charge. The scales were groaning under delicious red pyramids, when—Santa Maria!—up streamed from the other end of the market the whole of that American party, walking one behind another like a string of turkeys. They, too, had evidently seen these same cherries in the morning, evidently laid plans to be carried out on their return. When they saw the citadel already in possession of the enemy, they laid siege. Great was their consternation. "These Swedes positively go in for their own cherries," said one to another. "I think they might leave them for strangers. If we don't interfere they'll buy up the whole store."

As E. was spokesman our nationality remained unknown, and we went off in triumph to Cherry Walk. In quietness and solitude, yet surrounded on all sides by signs of life: by slowly-moving barges and throbbing steamers, forests of masts and forests of houses: we feasted like schoolboys on ambrosia; and, like schoolboys, mourned the end of all good things. The Americans we saw no more. It was their last day in Stockholm, as we had gathered from their conversation on board. They were on their

way to take possession of specially reserved and magnificent state cabins, bound for New York.

We had yet many days before us in Stockholm and in Sweden. Next morning saw us bound for Waxholm, one of the prettiest short excursions in this neighbourhood. The boat started in front of the hotel; we had not to run the gauntlet of the fruit and flower market. The flowers of Stockholm, by the way, were of no great beauty or fragrance, and certainly not abundant. Here, at any rate, we realised that we were under Northern skies, not in the sunny South. The gorgeous geranium of Spain, the delicate convolvulus of Italy, the sweet rose and violet of the Riviera, seemed unknown to Sweden, or known only in half-developed specimens.

We started for Waxholm without any noisy Americans, and rather missed them, for they had been very entertaining. Soon we passed into quiet waters; waters always beautiful, and bordered by luxuriant woods and forests. Country houses stood out amid groves of firs; distant castles, built of warm red brick or sandstone, reared their battlemented towers above the waving trees. Now richly-wooded banks narrowed the waterway; now we passed into wide, baylike stretches. Over all was a soft, warm tone, a clearness of sky and water, a lightness of the air full of singular exhilaration. Stockholm always seemed relaxing, but this atmosphere and influence braced one like sparkling wine.

Then Waxholm opened up. We had hardly seen

anything so pretty and picturesque. Houses sloped upwards from the waterside, in rows and clusters of bright colour that contrasted with the green woods and pale waters of the Baltic. A military castle gave dignity and importance to the little place, once a fortress of note, that has had to bow down before progress and invention. It is still a very pretty object, and so fulfils a purpose. As we approached, a boat was putting off, full of determined-looking men and officers, with fierce moustaches and flashing eyes, and swords and bayonets that ought to have struck terror into the heart of any well-disposed enemy.

We had half an hour to spare for inspection. Waxholm consisted, for the most part, of one long street of small houses and shops, painted all the colours of the rainbow, bright and primitive, "like birds of plumage gay." There was a distinct character about it, whilst in situation it was very romantic. The people all seemed friendly of disposition, and looked at you as if you were something less than a visitor from an unknown planet, or an enemy come to spy out the nakedness of the land. Opposite Waxholm the broad sheet of water was surrounded by wooded undulations of ravishing beauty. You might row across in a few minutes and be lost in wonderful solitudes. By going further up the waters, out towards the wider sea, one would make still more interesting discoveries. The immediate neighbourhood of Waxholm abounded in charming rural walks and excursions.

Much of this had to be conjectured, or gathered from the inhabitants. Half an hour is little to give to any place, yet was it sufficient to make us fall in love with Waxholm and regret our fleeting visit. In spite of frowning fortress and flashing swords it had a pastoral air, a look of repose, a feeling of friendliness, which seemed to say that here one could settle for a while and be at peace.

There are such places, which take you by storm once and for ever; and, since it cannot be the attraction of mind, it must be that of gravitation. One yields to the subtle influence, confident that it will never prove unfaithful. The Dead Sea fruit of experience is reserved for contact with the world, with its thousand-and-one disappointments, its records of broken friendships, lost trust; where mistakes become links forged about our life, riven bonds changing all one's sweet to bitter, the light of happiness to the darkness of despair.

But Nature, faithful to the end, forges no adamantine chains. To votaries at her shrine she will give of her best, draw them upwards by holy influences, raise the aspirations, change discords to harmony. When the ground was cursed for man's sake, to Nature was left all her divine beauty. Here, in her great outlines, she is out of reach of man's power. Mountains still have their eternal snows, valleys their laughing waters, and the sea will not stay its waves at any earthly bidding. It all brings one very near the Unseen; this contemplation of Nature at her best

is almost a raising of the veil. He who gazes at a summer sunset may even feel that the very gates of Paradise have opened to him. The glow will fade, the portals roll back, but it has been an experience more elevating and abiding than all the visions of the old mystics, who, with torments of the flesh, with watchings and fastings, saw not mercy but sacrifice in their religion.

CHAPTER IX.

GRIPSHOLM.

ONE of the most popular excursions round about Stockholm, and one of the most pleasant, takes you to Mariefred and the ancient castle of Gripsholm: the former so called after a fifteenth-century monastery dedicated to the Virgin. "Grip" is Swedish for "vulture," and the very name suggests a wild, wooded place, given up to solitary forests, haunted by birds of prey, and rock-bound shores washed by troubled waters. Such it may have been in ages past, but such it is no longer.

These waters were not troubled the day we paid them our visit, though winds blew cold and discoursed eloquently of the North Pole. Great-coats were a necessity, in spite of sunshine. We had the upper deck to ourselves, and braved the chilling blast under the lee of the captain's cabin and the steering-box. On the main deck and in the saloon's yet deeper depth, people of all nations sat and shivered, and shouted at each other in the shrill tones so dear to

foreigners. All seemed to possess one link in common —a red Baedeker. Swedes, French, German, Spanish, and one or two English—all had a Baedeker. As the sign of the Red Cross to the ancient crusader, so is Baedeker to modern tourists. And are they not also crusaders in their way, waging war upon all countries, not in the cause of religion or freedom; not always for love of Nature; but too often following each other like a flock of sheep, for the sake of excitement and imitation?

We, too, should have had a Baedeker, but not one had been left on English or foreign soil. An army of locusts had gone before and devoured them all. "Another edition in two months" was the usual reply, in tones which seemed to say that for the sake of Baedeker it was quite necessary to delay one's journey.

To-day there was quite a small edition on board, and the red covers were lying about the decks, bright as poppies in a cornfield. Great-coats and furs were at a premium, for the Swedes wrap up long before an Englishman dreams of doing so. The uncertain temperature, perhaps, gives them a sufficient reason; and the Frenchman's definition that the climate is eight months winter and four months cold weather has some truth in it as well as satire. No matter how hot and calm it might be in Stockholm, the moment we found ourselves on Lake Malaren a cold wind sprang up to mar its beauties. It seemed to blow from all quarters, swirl round all islands, rush up all arms and inlets, sough and sigh amongst the forest

trees, hover about our little steamer with shrieks and moanings, like

> The wail of lost souls that in vain
> Seek rest from their pain.

And yet every succeeding visit appeared to disclose fresh beauties, unfold new points of interest. Long shore lines and undulations swept round in curves, stretched out in wooded tongues. Occasional mansions were surrounded by park-like lawns and backed by an endless extent of forest. On a height, wooded, wild and tangled, an old, deep red, picturesque windmill was sharply outlined by the background of the blue, summer sky, with sails that were never meant to turn and walls that never vibrated to the sound of the grindstone.

On every side the lake is diversified with a multitude of islands. There are channels so numerous and intricate that to steer one's course amongst them would seem the lesson of a lifetime. Forests abound. More than half Sweden is forest land. Wild, beautiful forests, where you may revel in endless solitudes, in the song of the birds, the murmur of running streams, the fresh air of heaven, far from the haunts of men, the roar of cities. Down that channel to the left, the banks on either side lined with whispering waving woods, you presently come to Södertelje and all the picturesque life of the little town. Old women besiege you with cakes and cherries, make a small fortune and get excited with prosperity whilst the boat is being piloted through

the locks. Just beyond this you gain your first experience of the Gotha canal.

Bear to the right, as we did to-day, and you will soon come to a broad, beautiful bay, crowned by the small town of Mariefred, a church and quiet graveyard overshadowing the landing-stage On the opposite shore rises the imposing castle of Gripsholm, with its four unequal brick towers and their vane-pointed domes. In this sheltered bay it is warm and pleasant. The icy wind gains no entrance here and one feels in paradise. Great-coats and furs are discarded and given over to the care of the good-looking, good-natured stewardess, though inclined, like too many of her race, to embonpoint. The captain speaks good English, is agreeable and attentive, as if to do his best for you were not only his duty but his pleasure.

"I have often been to Mariefred," said he, "yet have never seen Gripsholm. But the day is so fine, and we have so much time before us, that I shall pay it my first visit." We upheld him in this laudable determination. "Dinner after we start again," he added. "There is an inn at Mariefred, but I don't think you would like it." We assured him that dinner on board and on deck under the blue skies had charms above and beyond the close confinement of all earthly tenements.

Everyone filed off, as usual, in detachments, each to his own, to rally under the castle roof. The most conspicuous member of the cavalcade was, of course, an English spinster of uncertain age and severe

aspect, in blue spectacles, a mushroom hat and a crinoline, who looked as if her mission were to revive the traditions of the past.

The walk led through the hilly churchyard and the small town, quiet and unpretending as an abandoned village. Rows of straight, deserted streets, looking very much like a huge toy set out for a child's amusement, rather than a habitation for man. Houses built of wood, painted many colours, white and yellow especially: none of them more than two storeys high, many of one floor only, like lengthened bungalows. Windows, clean-curtained and carefully kept, were adorned with flourishing plants, evidently well cared for. The place was absolutely deserted; life seemed stagnant. Grass grew in the streets. Where were all the inhabitants, and what were they doing? How did they pass their existence, earn their daily bread?

We were a hundred yards or so behind the pilgrims, who, straggling on in front, awoke echoes in the quiet thoroughfares but no responsive excitement. No face came to any window; no bright eyes or maiden's curious gaze added to the beauty of ferns and flowers. Windows remained undisturbed, curtains undrawn.

Ah! parais à ta fenêtre,
Qu'un doux regard de tes beaux yeux
En mon âme pénètre,
Et m'entr'ouvre les cieux!

It was vain to offer up silent serenades. Mesmeric influence, that loadstone of sentiment, had no place

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in the short and simple annals of the people of Mariefred. None rushed to their doors to gaze after the retreating army. The inhabitants seemed a race apart, a law unto themselves. Perhaps they turned day into night, and were plunged in dreamland. The monastery of St. Mary in its most cloistered days could not have seemed more dead to the world.

Out of the village into an avenue of trees, a short shaded walk, through which one caught glimpses of domes and turrets. Near the castle the trees spread out into small woods and shrubberies. Gardens flourished without the walls, flower-beds with large pansies delicate as a butterfly's wing, well-kept paths, seats cunningly secluded. A few feet from the castle stretched the lovely waters of the lake. You might stand upon the small landing-pier and let the ripples flash about you. A very short distance across compared with the round we had made, the village slept in peace, the church steeple pointed to the blue ethereal sky, the hands of the church clock slowly told the passing moments.

An arched gateway admitted us into a courtyard, quaint, irregular, brick-built, grey and sombre, yet formidable looking as became an ancient castle which has taken part in the history of Sweden, has sheltered kings, entertained them, imprisoned them. It began its career in far-off ages, but seems to have first become of importance about the fourteenth century, when Bo Jonsson Grip, in the days of King Albert of Sweden, gave it its present name. Gustavus Vasa

rebuilt and made of it a more picturesque and perfect building than it is to-day, with slanting roofs that harmonised with the towers.

At the same time, Gustavus Vasa, fighting with the world, and playing his part in the battle of life, was no friend to cloistered monks. He fortified the castle but demolished the monastery. It may be that he gave the monks the option of transferring themselves to the fortress, exchanging an inward and spiritual warfare for the more outward and visible sign of the temporal. But if they accepted the offer, doffed the monk's cowl for the soldier's helmet, laid aside pruning-hooks for spears, history is silent about it. History is not always silent or discreet, does not always bear out the maxim the monks themselves would perhaps have been the first to charge upon her: "De mortuis nil nisi bonum."

In this castle, Eric XIV., son of the great Gustavus Vasa, kept his brother John a prisoner in a small turret room, surrounded by a narrow passage, the only change allowed him for air and exercise. Here he might walk round and round in endless monotony, returning always to the same point, looking out upon the world from one of the narrow windows, and sighing for freedom. His time came. He escaped, and eventually deposed his brother, who in his turn became a prisoner, went insane, and was put to death by John, with a revenge that was deep and lasting. At Gripsholm, too, in 1809, Gustavus IV. signed his abdication.

Thus Gripsholm has had vicissitudes, seen changes within and without her walls. For the present she has sunk into a state of well-earned repose. Her life is calm and uneventful, her peace disturbed only by such inroads as we have under consideration.

The irregular courtyard, with its round massive tower and brick walls, was imposing, almost mediæval. Two cannon were before it with mouths pointed, asking, like sentinels, if you were friend or foe. One is called the *boar*, the other the *sow*, names too unromantic and undignified for such an atmosphere. On the walls were crests and coats-of-arms, so that the courtyard looked heraldic as well as military. It was the most imposing bit in all the building.

Within, it might be called historical. Many of the rooms were extremely interesting; fitted up—some of them scantily enough—with mediæval furniture and tapestry, ancient objects of glass and silver, antique cabinets, carved and jewelled, and ivory images that might have adorned some Pagan shrine. But if some of the rooms were unfurnished, the walls made up for any deficiency. They were lined with some two thousand historical portraits, many of them of great interest. Some had been painted, and well painted, by the unhappy Eric XIV. There were sovereigns and personages of all nations. Eric himself, and his father, Gustavus Vasa; Catherine de Medicis, with an expression worthy of her character; Mary of Scotland, lovely and bewitching; Henry VIII., in great breadth and boldness.

The captain of the steamer was standing beside us, admiring the proportions of this portly monarch. But when a slip of the tongue informed him that he had had eight wives, his admiration knew no bounds. Then, feeling it a duty to history and the shade of the bluff old king, to withdraw the surplus consorts, King Harry clearly went down twenty-five per cent. in the good skipper's estimation.

Some of the rooms were gloomy for want of light, often admitted through small latticed windows and tinted glass. Low ceilings, with great beams running across, had some of these rooms; immense fireplaces in which you might roast an ox or conceal a company of soldiers. But everything was interesting; the portraits alone were worthy, not one visit, but many.

A staircase, not beautiful, but ancient, with shallow steps and quaint balustrades of dark oak, led upwards to the room so long a prison, round which still seems to hover a profound melancholy, as if the ghost of the insane and murdered Eric haunted its old quarters and charged the atmosphere. Yet he was not put to death here. Two inquisitive German fraus began searching the fireplace in the angle of the room, raking amongst the ashes, the dust and fragments of mortar dislodged by time and weather—for all the world like a couple of that extinct race, the old Paris chiffonniers. Whether searching for hidden autographs, or the Philosopher's Stone, or a skull and crossbones to carry off by way of cheerful remembrance, or whether the insane spirit of the

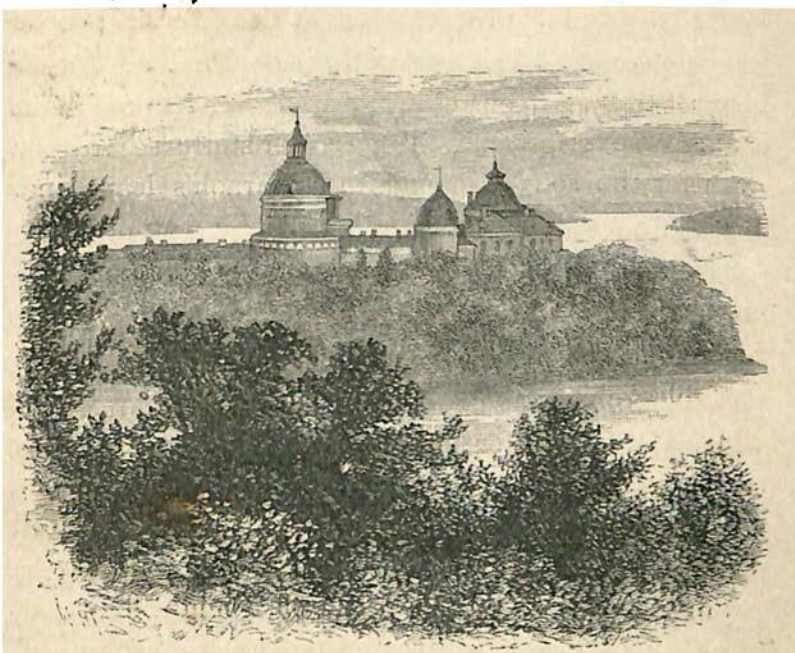
luckless Eric had seized upon them, no one knew. They were very excited, and had to be removed by strong persuasion.

From grave to gay. Within a few feet was the theatre built by the father of the unpopular Gustavus IV., in whose plays the king himself often took part. It was dark and sombre. Empty benches seemed peopled with phantoms of a courtly mob; boards echoed to the footsteps of a dead-and-gone monarch, frivolous and foolish, on whom the cares of an empire sat far too lightly. It was the saddest room in the castle, more sad than the gloomy prison itself. We were glad to leave it, and presently find ourselves in the open air and its healthier influence.

The pilgrims had scattered. Every one had gone his own way. We had the walks, and the flowers, and the old grey walls of the irregular pentagonal building, with its unequal towers, to ourselves. It was a very lovely and romantic spot. The castle stood on a neck of land almost surrounded by water. It rose above the trees in dignity and solitude, somewhat marred by a few modern buildings and dependencies added to it from time to time. Land stretched out in every direction, points opposing each other on the lake, wider waters beyond, with small islands that here and there rose like emeralds in a silver setting.

The hour for reassembling was still distant. We sat upon the landing-stage and revelled in all this beauty, enjoyed the close view of the romantic castle while its influence was yet near, and its portraits

seemed to gaze down upon us with a thousand eyes full of the Eastern warning: *This also shall pass away.* On the opposite shore was the steamer, quietly waiting the hour to strike from the church tower that overshadowed it. When that hour approached, we strolled back to the little town, full of strange thoughts



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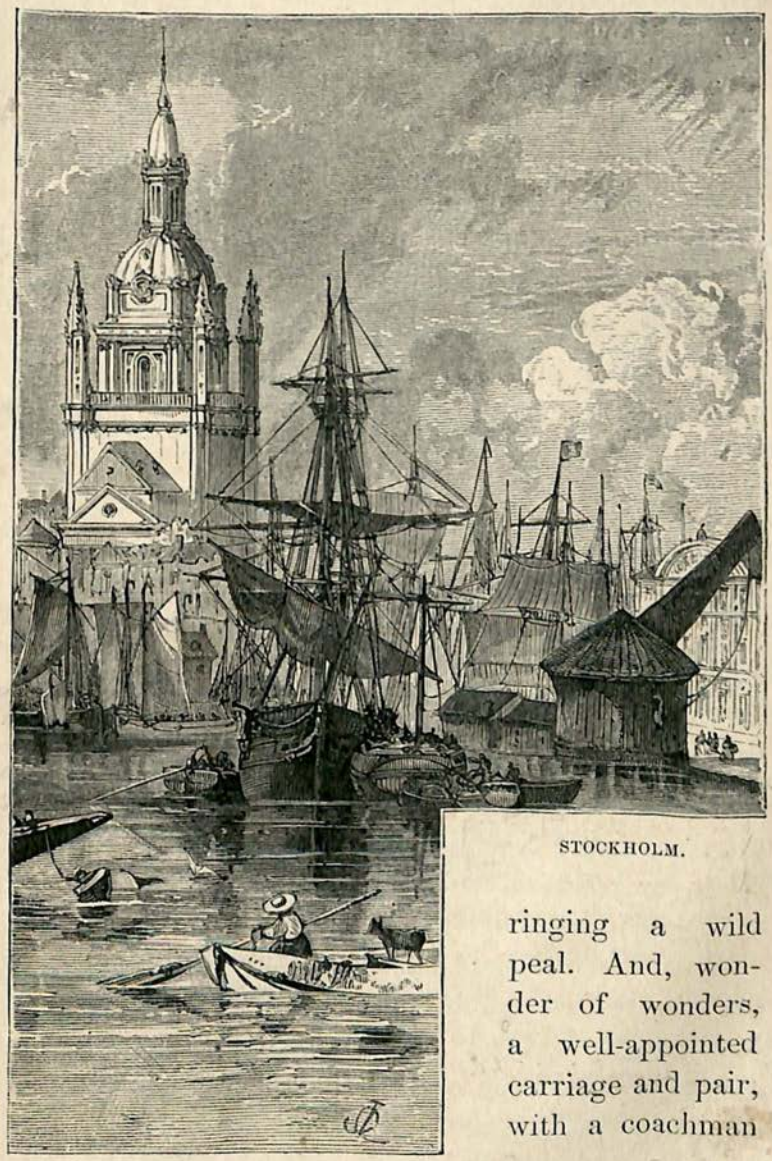
of what we had seen, brain-pictures of past lives and histories taking fantastic form and colouring. The town was not one whit less deserted. That people here lived and moved and had their being one supposed, for sundry doorways announced that printing was done on the premises, dresses were fashionably made, books were bound and books were sold. But

no creature was visible. And when we came to the bookseller's announcement, E. suggested that a small historical account of Gripsholm, if any existed, would not be a bad investment.

The door was closed. There were flowers in the windows guarded by faultless muslin, but no sign of books or people. We knocked at the door, as people knock who are afraid of waking the dead. A far-off voice bade us "open and walk up." We entered upon a narrow passage and still narrower staircase, narrow even for the sons of men after Pharaoh's lean kine. It certainly was a primitive, unworldly way of doing business. In an upper room appeared a quaintly-capped old woman, neither asleep nor inactive, nor looking in any way separate from mankind. Books on tables, chairs and shelves surrounded her, without which the room would have been like any ordinary sitting-room. She greeted us with old-fashioned courtesy, with pleasant voice and gentle look; placed chairs, as if we had merely done her the honour of paying her a morning visit, and she might be about to offer us the ancient hospitality of cake and wine.

But to her all this chaos and confusion meant system and order. She at once produced what was asked for, and was even not quite so unsophisticated as she seemed, for of two histories brought forward she recommended the more expensive. When it had been bought and paid for, one felt that this had been no mere sale and barter transaction, but an exchange of favours.

We left her and made way towards the steamer, whose whistle had sounded and whose first bell was



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ringing a wild peal. And, wonder of wonders, a well-appointed carriage and pair, with a coachman

whose uniform as usual was all pipestems and tassels, came tearing down towards the boat with a passenger and a portmanteau : the one sign of animation we had seen in the streets of Mariefred. This had mysteriously appeared out of the country from unknown shades and groves, to which it returned.

The hour struck and we departed. Awnings had been spread on deck and round the sides, and a feast, with no Barmecide element about it, was prepared. The captain was very animated about what he had seen, and again asked if we could positively assure him it was six wives, and not eight, the fine old king had taken to the splendour of his throne and the capacity of his heart. This seemed to him the only source of regret in that fair morning's pilgrimage.

The feast ended, we launched into the lake's wider waters. Back came the cold and cutting wind ; great-coats and furs were claimed by respective owners. Again we braved the elements from the freezing heights of the upper deck. Not that upper and lower decks made any great difference in degrees of temperature ; the wind searched and found out all alike ; and as E. alliteratively said, in words worthy of a Laureate :

> Beaux, belles, and Baedekers, baffled by briny breezes,
> Sat shivering o'er Swedish streams, suppressing sneezes.

But the wind gained the day, and presently the decks were deserted for the cabin, which must have been terribly cribbed and confined by the time the towers of Stockholm opened up and we came to an anchor.

CHAPTER X.

SKOKLOSTER.

ONE fine morning we started for Upsala, Sweden's chief university town. You may reach it from Stockholm by train or by canal, but the latter journey is pleasanter and more characteristic. Like the passage up the Gotha canal, this other canal route is unique of its kind and distinctly peculiar to Sweden.

It gives one the delightful sensation of a new experience; a sensation that grows more and more rare with time and travel. On the Upsala canal you feel that you are in a new world; are doing something you never did before, and will probably not meet with in any other country.

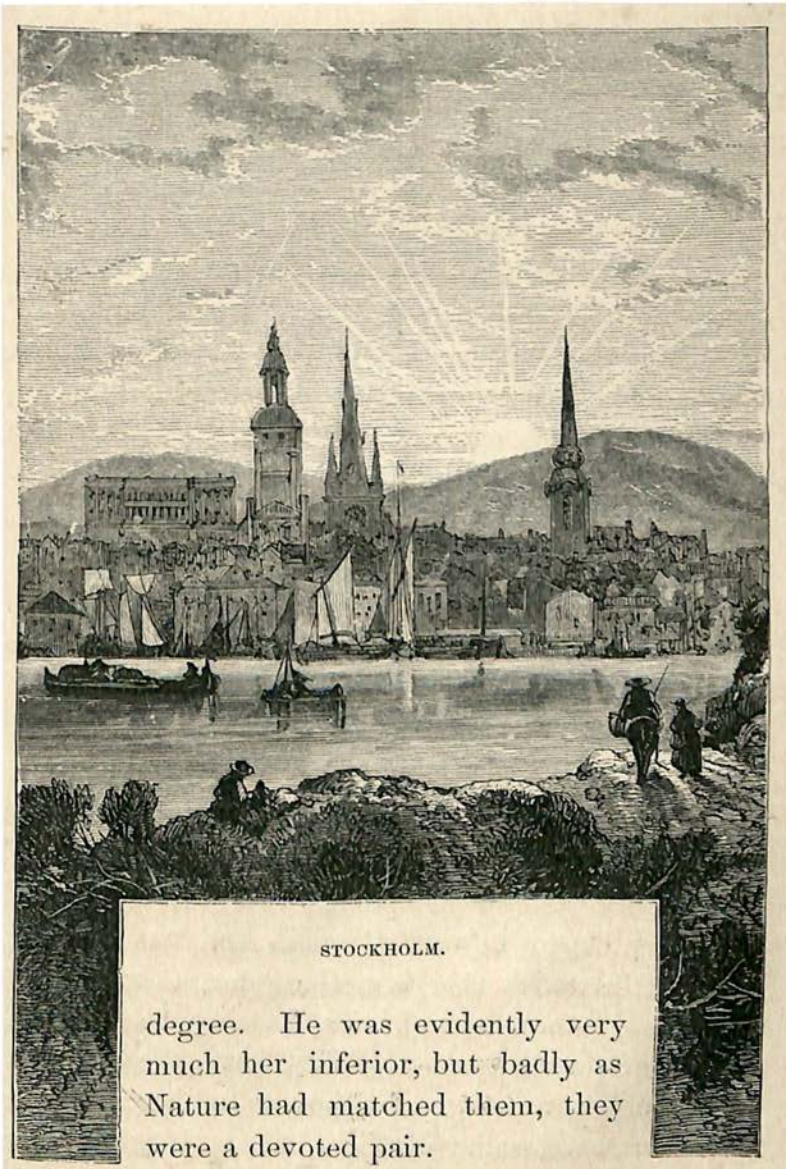
Everyone goes up the Gotha canal; few ever think of the Upsala canal or dream of doing it. Most people choose train in preference to boat. It is more quickly over, and the sooner they get to Upsala the better. Yet the journey was almost more enjoyable than the journey up the Gotha canal. It was very

different; less important; there were no interesting locks to mount or descend; no golden-haired lady on board dazzled us with her charms and divided our attention with passing scenes; no midnight experiences on mysterious lakes; no walks under the stars through avenues of splendid beeches. But there was the pleasure of the unexpected.

We had heard nothing of this canal journey; its praises had not been sung as those of the Gotha. Anticipating little, we received much. There was no ceremony or preparation; no troublesome hours for meals long drawn out. Best of all, there were no tourists. With the exception of a few pleasant Swedes, we had it to ourselves. There were more second-class passengers, but they were forward on a lower deck, and were rather an advantage than otherwise. One could see them, and study human nature from an edifying height. They were quiet and interfered with no one. The boat called at many stations, and they were bound to one or other of them.

Conspicuous and out of place amongst them was a lady, coquettishly dressed, with tight-fitting kid gloves and a lace parasol. She asked questions, took down answers, looked about her, consulted Baedeker, and was evidently writing a guide-book. Judging by her expression, it ought to have been intelligent; and exhaustive from the amount of pains she took to gather information. She was travelling under the protection of an attentive husband, who seemed very proud of her; sharpened her pencils,

referred to her book, held her parasol, generally fetched and carried for her, like any gallant of high



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degree. He was evidently very much her inferior, but badly as Nature had matched them, they were a devoted pair.

We had left Stockholm in the early morning. The day fortunately was bright and warm, for in bad weather the journey would turn all one's best to worst, one's sweet to bitter. We were to halt at Skokloster; an old castle passed on the way, full of wonders and curiosities, full of histories; and, in the dead of night, possibly full of ghosts. At high noon no ghosts were visible. At Skokloster the boat would go on her way to Upsala, and we should take a small steamer some hours later on, which happened to run that day. This second steamer proved a mere launch, and in rough or cold weather must be an expiation for many sins.

We started from the Riddarholm, where almost everything starts from in Stockholm, the small local steamers excepted. For a short time we ploughed the waters of the Malar Lake, through scenes now grown familiar, but never wearisome. Soon we turned sharply to the right, into narrower and unknown regions. The lake's wooded luxuriance gave place to long stretches of marshy ground. Again, fields, evidently cultivated by great labour, were backed by wooded hills and occasional farm-houses.

We plunged into great reeds and rushes with a delightful swish that is nothing less than one of Nature's pastoral symphonies, bracing one with a feeling of purest ecstasy. Why have the simplest things in Nature so great a power to charm? The bulrushes were, some of them, ten and twelve feet

high, and at one station we shipped a dried bundle, so tall as to excite universal admiration.

Outside one narrow channel we had to wait while a dozen barges passed us in procession, towed by a small toy tug. They were attached to each other "in linked harmony," one man to each barge, a long procession. We waited in the rushes, beside a wide stretch of fields where men and women, reaping, stopped their work to look at us, sharpened their scythes, and rested in the sunshine. To the left was the wildest, most flower-gemmed copse imaginable, with lights and shadows, gleams of sunshine, and murmuring trees full of Nature's tones and harmonies. Past this copse, gliding through the water, one after the other came the red barges, completing a singular and enchanting picture.

We took our turn when the passage was clear. Copse and fields passed out of sight, and the reapers broke into a wild Swedish chorus which came after us as a parting serenade, rang out joyously upon the air, and seemed to keep rhythm to their scythes.

Passing into wider waters, where the shores were broken and diversified, and small creeks ran up into the land, we came to the prettiest spot we had yet seen in Sweden. A small town sleeping in full sunshine on the sloping shores of the lake. Houses of many colours rose one behind another, separated by a narrow creek from richly-wooded heights and undulations.

On the small landing-stage a group awaited our

arrival: one solitary passenger was taken on board, and a small cloud of handkerchiefs waved him farewell.

We longed to leave the steamer and explore, but vagaries in travelling would end all plans and all time. Those to whom days and months and places are alike may make use of unexpected discoveries, break the thread of their arrangements and take it up again at pleasure. This forms the true delight of travelling; ends all that is stereotyped and conventional; yields adventures which break the monotony of days that might otherwise succeed and resemble each other only too closely; leads to scenes unheard of, unrecorded, but only the more charming for that reason. It is the fatality of life, the contradiction of human nature, that as a rule those to whom such things are possible are wanting in the spirit of enterprise, whilst to those who would make use of every opportunity time and circumstance are denied.

This little place, Sigtuna, the ancient Pagan capital of Sweden, had to give place to Upsala and Stockholm. Founded in the early ages, once large and prosperous, it is now little more than a village, with about five hundred inhabitants, and a few antiquarian ruins to tell of the past. Dead and gone and forgotten is all its ancient prosperity, and happily no one is left to mourn the change. Centuries have rolled away since it fell from its high estate; generations have succeeded to a new order of things, than which they knew no other. A small

rural district is all that it now writes itself, but neither time nor chance, man nor decree, has been able to take from it its charm. Never could it have been more lovely than now, overlooking the sparkling waters that beat against its rocks, and surrounded by endless forests.

After this the shores grew straight and more monotonous, and in about half an hour the imposing towers of Skokloster, where the water was widest, rose above the surrounding trees.

The stations between this and Stockholm had been too insignificant to own a pier. The steamer in sight, a small boat shot out from the shore, a rope was thrown, a ladder put over the side, and passengers scrambled in or out, often just escaping a cold plunge into the lake. But at Skokloster a landing-stage enabled those who left to walk on shore. It was about half-past twelve: we had been three hours and a half on board. The journey had been singular, and missing it we should have missed one of the pleasantest of our days in Sweden.

The word "Skokloster" means "Forest Convent," and in the old monastic times it was probably well named. It now belongs to Count Brahe, a descendant of Tycho Brahe, the astronomer. Gustavus Vasa put an end to the Cistercian convent as he did to the monastery of Mariefred; the building in time partially or wholly disappeared, and the present one rose in its stead. It is full of treasures and curiosities, many of them collected during the Thirty Years' War. The

custodian met us at the pier, and it was amusing to find him too great a man to carry our handbag, though quite ready to accept a fee later on for showing us over the château—certainly well earned by his civility on that occasion.

The way from the pier led uphill, under the grateful shade of trees; for, coming off the water, the air suddenly seemed seven times heated. A hundred yards of ascent and we stood before the massive building, imposing, quadrangular in form, with four octagon towers surmounted by black cupolas and small turrets. Four long straight rows of stiff windows, one above another, gloomy and sombre, stared at us like countless eyes in the white walls. A cracked bell chimed the melancholy hours, and seemed to say to the listener, like the monks of La Trappe, and in the midst of a profound solitude and silence: "Memento Mori."

The courtyard was large, silent and depressing, and here surely the sun never penetrated. We were alone, not one of a crowd, as at Gripsholm. And at Skokloster there was no portrait of a fine old English king to dazzle a worthy skipper, and, as it seemed, spur him on to go and do likewise. But perhaps we wronged him.

Large whitewashed corridors ran round the quadrangle, and proverbs of wit and wisdom, meant to be thoughtful and elevating, were written upon the walls in many languages and singular fashion. The rooms, large and well-proportioned, contained

rare curiosities. Collections of jewels and plate, objects of priceless and historical value, cabinets wonderfully inlaid, antique furniture, ancient chimney-pieces large and splendidly carved, pictures and portraits; and, not least of all, a collection of some of the most wonderful tapestry in existence. Many of the ceilings were splendidly painted. Above, was a magnificent library of over twenty thousand volumes, many of them in white vellum bindings, dry, ancient, and apparently never opened. It was a feast of reason only to walk from case to case and read titles where titles were. Equally splendid was the adjoining armoury, but suggestive of very different times and scenes: the knight of the sword contrasted with the knight of the pen; the two reposing side by side in such harmony as surely never existed between them in life. The object of chief interest in the armoury was a wonderfully wrought shield by Benvenuto Cellini, which belonged to the Emperor Charles V., and was taken at Prague. The custodian declared that 20,000*l.* had been lately offered for it, and refused.

In one of the turrets we came upon an unexpected prisoner. The room contained old relics, swords and guns, and clothes worn by great men in battle. A bird, with possibly a taste for antiquities, had flown down the chimney, and was self-caught. There it might have remained, and in turn become an antiquity also, but for our visit. Windows were opened, and finding its way out, it flew over land

and lake. We, too, wished for wings to do likewise. Who has not felt the longing, especially when listening to the lark, that for very happiness "soaring still doth sing?"

Inspection over, luncheon had to be thought of. One cannot live upon tapestry and beautiful objects: it is not so sure that one cannot die of them. They are interesting, but exhausting. There is no inn at Skokloster, and some of the dependents of the castle undertake to provide luncheon for visitors. The attendant led the way to some neat but humble rooms, and here they promised that in half an hour expiring nature should be revived. There was a delicious vagueness as to the kind and measure of the supplies. We had visions of nectar and ambrosia.

To pass away the time the custodian accompanied us to the church, which belonged to the original monastery, and is interesting. Then he finally bowed himself out of our presence, and left us to wander at will about the gardens and avenues. The melancholy clock struck two, and we obeyed the signal. The windows of the little room were open to the warm air and rustling trees, and bright blue sky: deep, old-fashioned casements, in which we sat and lounged with a feeling of intense restfulness after our late antiquarian feast; whilst a savoury smell, wafted through an open doorway, announced a feast in which we devoutly hoped antiquity would have no part. A little maid waited upon us, and from regions unseen brought excellent, if not precisely

Olympian, supplies; whilst all was served on the whitest of damask.

Altogether that visit to Skokloster was wonderfully pleasant. It left a feeling of temporary seclusion from the world; of wandering in unfrequented paths; of a château large and imposing, if not strictly beautiful, and containing objects of rare interest. The little steamer was due at three o'clock, and when the hour sounded we went down to the small landing-stage. Lake and opposite and surrounding shores were in full sunshine, but no boat was visible.

About half-past three a black speck came into sight. A thin line of smoke, rising upwards, slightly troubled the clear sky. It puffed on to a distant point on our side, and was lost in the shadow of the trees. On the opposite shore a red flag was suddenly hoisted, signal of distress or need. In a few minutes the boat darted across, to the relief of a small landing-stage and a group of people in every attitude of expectation.

After that it made for our pier. A small boat, no bigger than a steam launch, not very clean, very little protected against wind and storm, altogether uncomfortable. We started, and in the warm fine weather enjoyed the novel situation.

The boat called at innumerable stations and made slow progress. Wherever she was wanted up went a red flag, and away she darted, performing incessant zigzags, until we began to think Upsala would never be reached. Where did these little landing-stages

lead to? What sort of settlements? What kind of people? Where did they all come from? What out-of-the-world lives did they live? For we never saw any houses—nothing but long unbroken stretches of forest, uninhabited and desolate. Nothing but these small landing-stages to show that somewhere beyond those forests dwelt people who had occasional need to communicate with the outer world.

The boat took a great amount of luggage on board; cases full and empty; crates of beer bottles, proving that up here, at any rate, total abstinence was not universal. At one station there seemed to have been a general flitting. Three old ladies, a servant, beds, and sundry articles of household furniture. The dames had last instructions to deliver to those they left behind, extra cloaks to take off or put on, long and tender embracings—all most deliberately done whilst the boat waited in patience. At last the captain said he would go without them, and they made the final plunge on board, rather than be separated from their beloved goods and chattels.

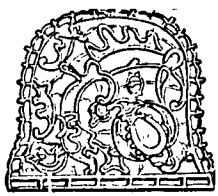
By degrees the little craft became crowded with people, heavy with cargo. She grew low in the water, and visions of foundering, a great splash, and a tragedy began to arise. There even came a time when the captain refused any more cargo: decks were full, and also the wooden roof or awning. By this time we were in the Upsala canal; narrow, rush-grown waters on a level with the banks; shores no longer wooded, but cleared, sometimes cultivated. Signs and sounds

of life awakened; small houses, frequent landing-stages, where flags were no longer needed. A peculiar tone about the landscape reminded one of the green meadows of Holland with their broad dykes and canals; for this canal was sometimes hardly broader than a dyke. It was extremely interesting, and everything was new and unfamiliar, but when three hours had passed away we were not sorry to approach Upsala. Moving about on board had become out of the question, breathing only just possible.

Finally, the banks rose on either side; streets, a long row of houses lining the canal. We were in Upsala, passing upwards to the landing-stage. Warehouses, blacksmiths' shops, iron factories, dark and grim, gave place to quieter buildings, clean and white. A weir ahead of us, evidently not to be passed, and just on this side of it our landing-stage.

The very first person on shore to greet our eyes was the lady passenger who had been on board the first steamer, attended by her devoted husband. Her note-book was conspicuous, but the lace parasol was nowhere. She still looked the essence of neatness; a comely woman, who knew how to set herself off to the best advantage. She gave us an involuntary flash of recognition as we landed; then turned to her inferior half with a look of consternation, as if for once she had not seized her opportunity. "My beloved Theophilus," we heard her murmur, "this also we might have done—this we ought to have done!"

We heard no more, but went our way; a long line of houses on one side, trees and water on the other; a very picturesque scene. We enquired our way to the Stadtshotellet; and looked around to see how far the venerable and learned atmosphere of the university town had overshadowed place and people.



CHAPTER XI.

UPSALA.

WE left the interesting lady-passenger one of the small crowd upon the quay, and went our way in search of the Stadtshotellet. Omnibuses, porters, flys—all were conspicuous by their absence. This small boat was evidently not worth the trouble of looking up. Le jeu ne valait pas la chandelle. It seldom brought passengers for inns or hotels. So, in the hands of fate, we marched up the canal side, under the shade of the trees, enjoying the only picturesque thoroughfare Upsala possesses. It has other thoroughfares, but they are not picturesque.

We went on until it seemed advisable to consult an oracle. Fate is capricious, and does not always lead one to desired havens. The oracle bade us cross the second bridge and keep straight on. We did so, and presently came to a long, low building, with the welcome word "Stadtshotellet" over the wide doorway. It looked grave and quiet, as befitted

a university town. On a steep hill at the end of the street was a large, solemn-looking structure, the words "Carolina Rediviva" in gold letters stretching across it. This was the famous Library of Upsala, with its countless volumes and priceless MSS. The Cathedral was behind the inn, the Archbishop's palace at the side, the Colleges were just beyond. We were in the odour of sanctity.

But, for the present, more mundane affairs called for attention. Libraries and cathedrals, palaces and colleges are admirable in their way, but everything has its season.

> Leaves have their time to bud and fall,
> The heart for sorrowing;
> The bird that lately cleaved the sky
> Lies dead with folded wing.

Our duty just now was to secure foothold in the Stadtshotellet. We anticipated no difficulty. The town seemed empty, the streets deserted. Only by chance had we lighted upon the one solitary oracle who had given us faithful counsel. The Cathedral clock rang out the hour and startled the air we breathed. The hotel itself appeared abandoned.

We turned in. Not a soul to be seen. A large empty courtyard forming three sides of a quadrangle. The fourth side, open and expanding into a garden, was set out with small tables, a few arbours, a statue or two representing nothing less frivolous than Justice and Wisdom, undraped and shivering. A few trees completed the adornment of this abode of gods

and mortals. Nothing living or human was visible. Inroads and arrivals were not expected. The host was napping, his dependents were at play. If Jack had chosen to run off with the hotel, as he did with the harp, there was neither cock to crow nor giant to awaken.

We looked about. No one came. The office was empty. All the rooms on the left were being renovated and refreshed. A smell of varnish made it further necessary to escape this part of the house. At last a bell-handle declared itself, and we awoke echoes only inferior to those lately raised by the cathedral clock. This presently brought forth a female Mercury, not winged but wise, who looked at us as if we had just come from Olympus, and she wondered how we had made the transit. Trains were not due, boats were all in, there were no clouds about, and no celestial car.

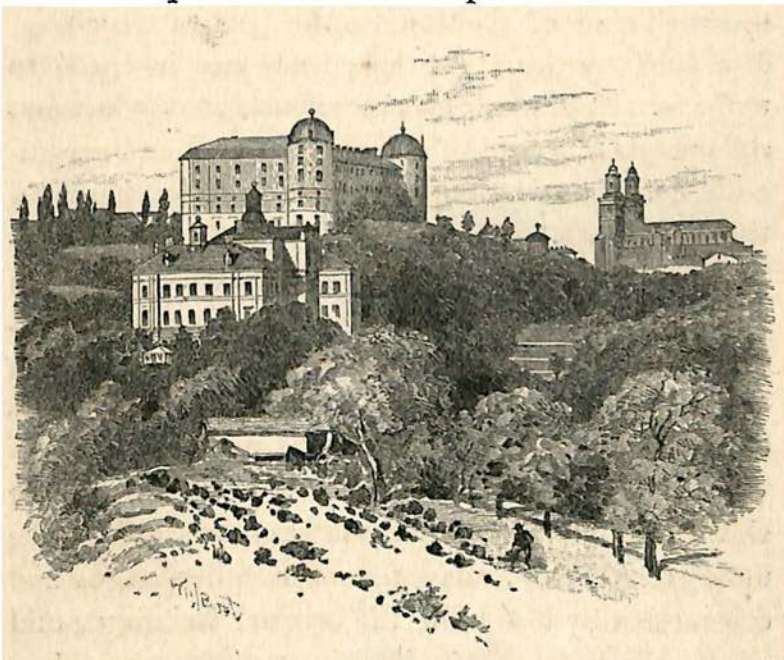
On desiring to be quartered, she assumed a perplexed air, and intimated that, always full, they were now simply crowded. Part of the house, also, was being done up; a statement to which our five senses bore witness. Then she conducted us to rooms gloomy and uninhabitable; small, dark and funereal; an atmosphere of ghosts, a suspicion of murders. Declined with thanks. Next she led the way to a magnificent suite of seven rooms, opening into each other. The Archbishop might have held a church congress here, but they were superfluous in size and glory for a small select party of two.

Finally, this cunning Mercury was seized with an idea; led the way through dark, mysterious corridors, piloted us up sundry flights of stairs, and down others, to quarters charming and compact. The windows overlooked the little coffee-tables, the statues of Justice and Wisdom, the trees, the distant seats of learning. Nothing could be more edifying. This Mercury was wise in her generation, but so were we in ours. With a reverence, but a thwarted look, she departed to unseen regions.

Presently, going out to reconnoitre, we met three ladies coming up the staircase, under guidance of the landlord, who had put in an appearance with the rattling up of the station omnibus. The train from Stockholm was just in, bringing with it these Americans—very quiet and nice they were—whom we had left that morning breakfasting at the Grand Hotel. So is it with nearly all who visit Sweden. These ladies little guessed the pleasant day they had missed upon the water, so admirable an introduction to the sober realities of Upsala. It would have been cruel kindness to enlighten them now that it was too late. There are so many people in the world whose delight is to inform you that the one thing you have missed was worth more than all the rest you saw and did put together.

Outside, the streets were depressing. No students rushing about in bands; no far-off sounds of riot and revelry; no enticing wine cellars, like those choice German rendezvous of good fellowship. No frivolity

here, one could only suppose. Swedish students were evidently very different from German; more sober and meritorious. Upsala was no Heidelberg, where duelling is the favourite recreation, and every student is ready to take up both his own and every-one else's quarrel. This atmosphere did honour to



UPSALA.

the residence of an Archbishop, the seat of a University, the possessor of the only real Cathedral in Sweden worthy of the name.

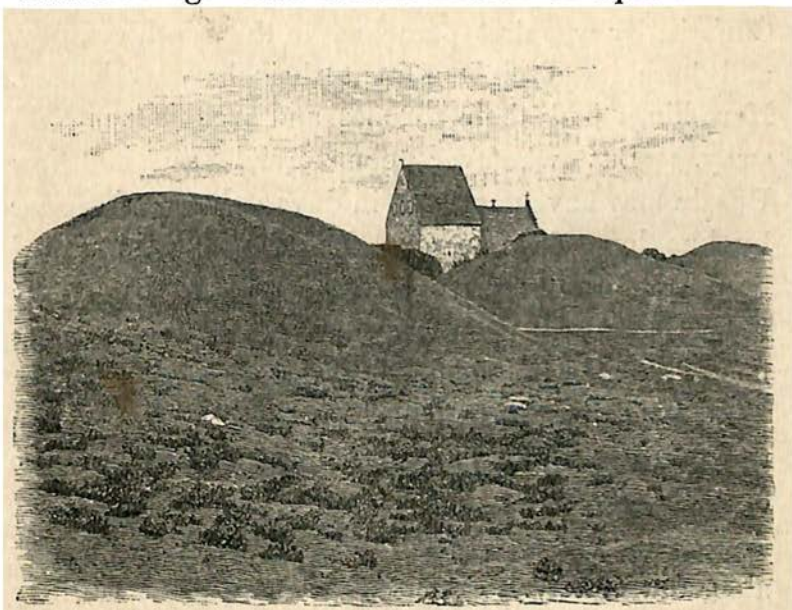
It was so near the hotel, this Cathedral, that we turned to it at once. Standing on high ground, above the level of the town, it is only looked down upon by such buildings as the old Castle, the Library

and the Colleges. It is the most interesting part of Upsala, and the close, or precincts, are quaint and uncommon. The Cathedral, built of red brick, is massive and somewhat heavy, but imposing. It is simply and severely Gothic. The towers are plain and unfinished; they want spires, and had them until the beginning of the last century, when they were destroyed by fire. The west doorway is crude to ugliness. The windows are almost wholly without stained glass, so that the interior is cold and unsympathetic. Imagination is not influenced by beautiful tints and tones. The pavement is not dyed by rainbow hues creeping upward with the sun. The "dim religious light," prevalent in so many foreign cathedrals, especially in those of Spain—of which that of Valencia is one of the most imposing—here comes only with the ghostly shadows of evening.

The Cathedral of Upsala was begun in the thirteenth and finished in the fifteenth century. Like most of its kind, it has gone through changes and destruction by fire until the original building could no longer be recognised. Many of the alterations are badly done. The towers are out of harmony with the rest of the building. The west front is gloomier than a prison entrance. The bells have very little music in them. They mark the hours with an iron tongue that vibrates far over the immense plain of the surrounding country, but does not charm.

The brick with the lapse of time has toned to a

deep and picturesque red, possessing more warmth but less purity than the orthodox and ecclesiastical stone. The size of the Cathedral is heightened, and also its effect, by a sojourn in Sweden, where cathedrals are not, and churches are cold, formal, and uninteresting. The mother-church of Upsala comes



OLD UPSALA.

as a relief; the eye rests upon it with a certain long-desired satisfaction.

In bygone ages when the kings of Sweden had their residence at Old Upsala, it was also the seat of the archbishops. In those days the present Upsala was its harbour and commercial centre. In the thirteenth century the kings went to Stockholm and the archbishops to New Upsala. Perhaps the two

powers felt in those early times as a great many very good people feel in these: they would be excellent friends if they did not meet too often.

Thus this part of the country is of great historical interest. It was the stronghold of Paganism, and here heathen superstition has left its traces. Here Christianity was first preached in the ninth century, and here its disciples fought their hardest battles. Here kings had their thrones and archbishops held sway. But whatever commercial aspect New Upsala may have possessed in days and centuries gone by has long disappeared. It is now distinguished by all the gravity befitting a Cathedral and University town, and all the deadly liveliness that so often goes hand-in-hand with them.

Upsala's past, for all these reasons, gives it a legitimate interest in the present, and makes the silence of her streets to-day all the more conspicuous.

In the evening light the cathedral looked venerable and stately. Perfect quiet reigned. The sky was deepening with twilight; shadows were falling, veiling the quaint houses of the close. A church, still older than the Cathedral, small and grey, reposed westward. Beyond it was the famous Library; above, on the highest point, the old Castle, not at all ornamental and no longer very useful.

The town yielded quite a different scene and influence. Streets without beauty or attraction, always excepting that possessing the river, where the steamers lay alongside under the shadows of the

trees. The rest is commonplace, with few picturesque bits or ancient houses to give it interest. It was not enlivening, but very much the opposite. Yet it is said to be pleasant as a place of sojourn; where houses are good, and living is cheap, and people are learned, and friendly and hospitable to the strangers within their gates.

Music was going on in two different parts of the town, and we wondered what sort of entertainment this archiepiscopal seat of learning would furnish its grave inhabitants. Disappointment of course awaited us; the same old story; a little extra frivolity, perhaps, but that was all. Possibly the great minds here find it necessary to unbend. The bow always strung weakens. A tame orchestra played light music; an open-air theatre furnished foolish performances. The large enclosure was covered with small round tables. An assembled crowd listened with marked appreciation to the entertainment. Those who would not pay for their pleasure meanly stood without the barriers, where they heard and saw just as well as those within.

We had expected better of Upsala, and with sad reflections turned away in search of fresh fields.

The other Tivoli, if so called, was a combination of indoor and outdoor entertainment; an orchestra in the garden, and a café brilliantly lighted within and without. Perhaps the hour had not yet struck for the habitués to assemble; perhaps the attractions of the rival we had just left were more popular.

Whatever the cause, the audience might be numbered by units.

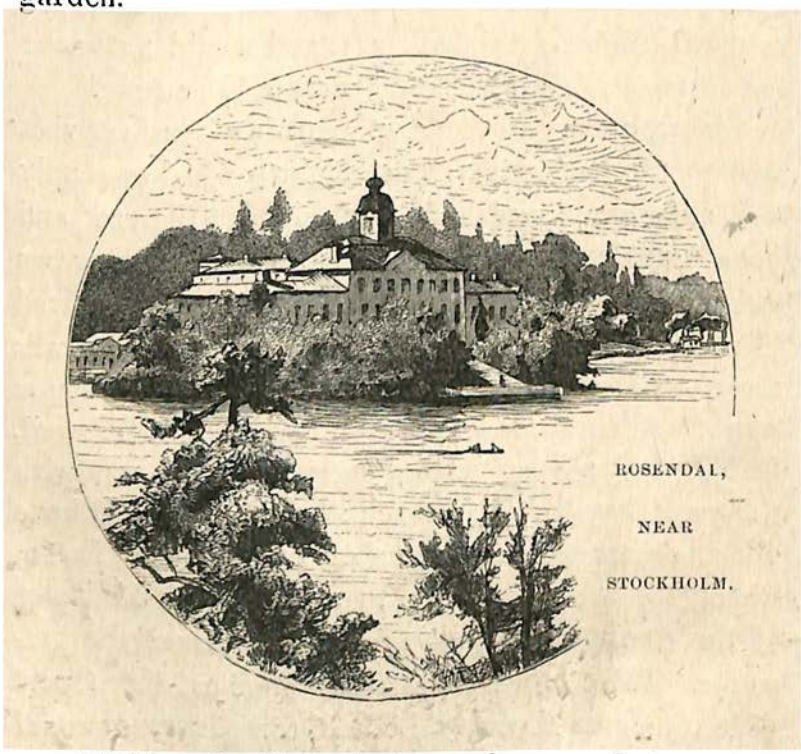
It was depressing, and we settled ourselves outside on a bench facing a quiet stream that ran at right angles into the Fyrisä. Distance lent enchantment to the music. Darkness fell; the Cathedral towers stood out above the town and the trees like shadows upon the deepening sky. On a steep hill to the left loomed the old Castle, as it has loomed for three centuries and more. It has fallen from its high estate. Having entertained kings, received embassies, been the scene of regal pageants, witnessed the abdication of an eccentric Queen, it is now half a ruin, and gives a residence to the Governor of the county. Very grim it looked against the night sky, interesting only for historical reasons. The stars came out, "the spangled heavens, a shining train;" the night wind turned chilly; on the stream before us a mist began to rise; the trees grew shadowy and mysterious.

We wandered past the little weir, down to the steamers that had successfully helped us on our way to Upsala. Side by side, the larger looked like a leviathan overshadowing the smaller. They were quiet after their day's work, waiting for the morrow to begin again. The little crowd had dispersed. The interesting lady had disappeared with her note-book and her husband. Silently flowed the stream, on, on, towards Lake Malaren and the Baltic. Opposite were the red-brick water-works; or per-

haps it was only a hydropathic establishment; or even it might be the public laundry. We never quite found out what it was; and, as Mr. Toots would have said, it was not of much consequence. Everything had settled down for the night: an example to be followed in this dull town, where evidently Robin Adair was not, and would not come for all the ballads "that ever were said or sung."

After breakfast the next morning our first visit was to the Cathedral. Last night we had seen only the outside: doors had been all fast barred and bound against the shades of evening. To-day we went in search of the sacristan or verger, who lived in a small house in the close. The good man was away—they are so often away—but his good woman was equal to the occasion. She did quite as well, and proved a very interesting guide. Armed with the great keys of the church: keys that would have done honour to the figure of St. Peter in Rome, whose toe has been worn to a shadow by the kisses of the devout: she accompanied us across the precincts. With true professional manner, she threw wide the north doorway. These comparatively small north and south doorways are both more interesting and beautiful than the large, offending west front. Pointed archways are adorned with crumbling statues and empty niches and carved work worn with the lapse of ages. Far above, in nooks and crevices, pigeons cooed and fluttered and found a refuge. One of the portals was decorated with a figure of St.

Lawrence and the Six Days of Creation. The figures of Adam and Eve closing the scene, left everything to be desired in the way of symmetry, and were quite as shivering and much less beautiful than the statues of Wisdom and Justice we had left in the hotel garden.



ROSENDAL, NEAR STOCKHOLM.

Within, the Cathedral was large and imposing, but white and cold. The arches of the nave are supported by twenty-four pillars of fine proportions. The roof is beautiful and not spoilt. In the centre of the nave was a splendidly-carved oak pulpit, but the high old-fashioned pews over which it kept watch and ward were depressing. There are side chapels

all round the Cathedral, containing for the most part the tombs of the great. Broad daylight comes in through the unstained windows and gives them a chilling aspect. The pride of the building is the chapel immediately behind the choir containing the tomb of Gustavus Vasa, apparently more treasured than the shrine of the great St. Eric. The chapel is hung round with paintings of different actions of his life, some of them difficult to interpret. The king reclines in marble between his first two wives and seems very much at peace with both. His third wife has a monument to herself on the left. She survived him more than half a century, and seems to belong to a later day and generation. The whole is guarded by wrought-iron gates.

The silver shrine of St. Eric, patron saint of Sweden, reposes to the right of the choir, enclosed in a crystal case guarded by silver bars, its chief ornament. It is treasured as reverently as the body of St. James at Santiago, though less superstitiously. At the west end of the church the organ rears its magnificent head, a mixture of dark woodwork and silver pipes, which to-day, alas, were silent. Immediately beneath is a plain slab bearing the one word *Linnæus*. Here the great botanist reposes, and a chapel on the north side is dedicated to him. The tones of the organ were denied to us, but if the dead can hear, Linnæus, in his quiet resting-place must often rejoice in the strains that vibrate and echo above him in the long lone aisles and arches. But

church music in Sweden is simple and uninteresting. The harmonies of chant and anthem which delight in our own services are here unknown. At night, as the sun goes down and darkness falls, the shadows play at hide-and-seek, like spirits risen from their tombs.

Our lady verger, in her anxiety that we should see and understand everything, interlarded her discourse with an occasional English word, followed by a pause which only made its obscurity more impressive. In the sacristy she proudly unveiled a collection of jewelled crowns and sceptres and gold and silver curiosities, all displayed at the enthronement of every new archbishop. These she assured us were priceless. They were certainly curious and ecclesiastical. Up a narrow staircase we followed in faith, to a collection of ancient garments cunningly worked in jewels and coloured silks and gold and silver thread. Hung in cases, they looked ancient enough to have belonged to the first archbishop, who seven hundred years ago and more had founded his see in Old Upsala, succeeding the Druids and the Pagans.

With these gorgeous impressions we left. The skilful exhibitor had reserved her grand effect to the last. Almost she resented our going up to take another look at St. Eric's shrine, so well guarded in its crystal case. She accompanied us to the south doorway and pointed out St. Eric's well. Tradition says it flows from the very spot on which the saint found his death. Nothing would shake her faith.

STOCKHOLM.

There was the well as evidence—what could be clearer? Less reverent was her feeling for the small old church to the south-west of the Cathedral, of yet greater antiquity. What beauty it may once have had has disappeared. Time in this instance has not been kind. Through the windows we could see the dark, high pews and cold white walls; next Sunday's hymns were marked in figures on the usual black-board; there was absolutely nothing to repay the trouble of examination, and we left it in peace.

The Library, with its two hundred and fifty thousand volumes, and many thousand manuscripts was not yet open. We wandered upwards under the trees, to the old Castle, which only grows more uninteresting as you approach it. The cannon might have been formidable in its day, but were so no longer. A boundless plain stretched out before us. The small, quaint church of Old Upsala could be seen in the distance. On the other side the Castle the country was dark and gloomy with forest lands. On cold winter nights the wind has it all its own way here, and perhaps mingles its roar with that of wild beasts lurking about with unkindly intentions. The town lay at our feet, taking life's rush with infinite calm. One of our little steamers had disappeared, the other was getting up steam. Beyond them were the works and forges we had passed yesterday. Far away we could trace the little river like a silver thread wending its way between the fields and long Dutch-like reaches of the open country.

The grey old Castle was in the background, with a dilapidated gateway and a great square courtyard. Flowers and other marks of civilisation in certain windows betrayed the portion dedicated to the Governor. Sounds of harmony, vocal and instrumental, vibrated upon the air. A nightingale, not of the winged tribe, was declaiming with energy "O Luce di quest' Anima." Possibly the sweet strains came from the Governor's Commander-in-Chief—that power behind the throne greater than the throne itself—or from his more interesting and not less tyrannical cara figlia. There are chains and tyrannies from which one escapes by simply cutting the Gordian knot, and there are others which are a delight.

Altogether the place looked more domestic than military. Instead of sentries presenting arms, or helmeted knights coming forth on fiery steeds, there was nothing on the greensward more romantic than a couple of female servants beating carpets—certainly with a vigorous arm and a vengeance—and casting regretful sighs and languishing glances at the empty sentry boxes.

The hour struck for admission to the Library. We left the Castle and the strains, gave a last look at the broad sweeping plains and the silver stream, went down and entered the large building.

An appalling array of books, extremely rare and valuable, exceedingly interesting to anyone who had access to them. To mere birds of passage, the MSS. claimed more time and attention. Rarest and most

prized was the Codex Argenteus, so called because it is written in letters of silver and gold on a purple ground. But the purple had lost much of its colour and the letters were fading. It is a translation of the four gospels made in the fourth century by Bishop Ulfilus, and is said to have formed the basis of the Teutonic language.

Amongst the MSS. were specimens of English, French and German prose writers: the MS. of Frithiof's Saga; letters of Hans Christian Andersen; songs of Bellman; autograph letters of kings and emperors. All these made the visit an interesting recollection: these and the extreme courtesy of the librarians. We longed for more time, but could no more delay than we could bring back the authors of these imperishable thoughts. There is always more pain than pleasure in looking at the MSS. of the great dead and gone. Their lives have passed into the unseen, but the hands that traced the characters lie between us and the pages, and we hardly know whether that sigh was our own or came from the spirits that seem to fill the air with their influence.

Time and tide wait for no man. We were to leave Upsala to-day and much remained to be done. Especially to visit Old Upsala, whose interest dates back to days of Pagan history. It was a drive of three or four miles, and the host of the Stadtshotellet had promised a conveyance for a certain hour. We found it awaiting our pleasure. An extraordinary turn

out, something like a Victoria ; a pair of horses strong enough to draw the Library itself ; a coachman in pipe-stick livery and silver buttons. Everything, including Jehu, was contemporary as to period : as far as we could judge about that of the deluge.

We started with a crash, awoke echoes in the quiet streets, as deserted to-day as they had been last night, passed through funny little squares and a market-place, out into the open country. A strong east wind swept over the broad flat plains, bringing up a storm of sand. The cloud was so blinding that we almost gave in to the enemy and turned back. But perseverance surmounts sandstorms, and we guessed rather than saw the end approaching.

We thought we had had enough of this and would return by train. But the station was quiet and closed. The stationmaster was in his little house round the corner, enjoying a luxurious leisure and a midday repast in the bosom of his family. It was no doubt necessary after his hard work : three trains a day and perhaps twice as many passengers coming and going. There would be another train in five hours, if we liked to wait. He was very civil and quite anxious and pressing. Five hours for a five minutes' journey. He did not in the least mean to be sarcastic, which made it all the more amusing. We thought we would risk another sandstorm.

The end of the drive justified the means. The church of Old Upsala was remarkable, not for beauty, but by reason of its antiquity. It was plain, almost

barnlike, within and without, with a slanting roof, higher over the doorway than over the nave. Every stone bore the mysterious impression of age; carried you in spirit to days long past.

Perhaps some of its influence was borrowed from the singular mounds or tumuli that overshadowed it. These date back to Pagan times. Tradition says they are the graves of Odin, Thor, and Frey, heathen kings who came to be worshipped by the people. Old Upsala was the centre of this worship. It had a magnificent temple and sacred groves. From the trees victims might often be seen hanging in propitiatory sacrifice to these deified monarchs, who were supposed to love blood and cruelty. They were the Juggernauts of that age.

All traces of groves and temple have disappeared, as much as the people who worshipped and the rites they followed. But these tumuli remain, they will not crumble with age or pass away with time. The turf dies with Autumn and revives with Spring. Immense graves they might well be, rising sixty feet high in gradual slopes. There was a dark tone about them, gloomy and impressive. It was nothing more than the green of the grass, but it was a melancholy green, in harmony with the spell they threw over mind and feeling.

In the church the small organ was giving forth unearthly groans at the hands of the organist. The blower was indolent, and every now and then let out the wind, and set one's teeth on edge. The instrument

STOCKHOLM.

might have been as old as the church itself, but time had not mellowed its tones. We escaped for our lives and returned to Jehu, who, outside the churchyard, possessed his soul in patience. To him all churches were alike; these tumuli were mere hills and undulations. If he thought of the buried gods it was only in hot argument, when consigning his adversary to the antipodes, or bidding him "Go to Odin." This is their way of using strong language; and they may have gifted Odin with horns and a cloven foot. We have our forms of strong language also, and they are not any better than the language one hears under these Northern Skies.

We left Old Upsala with its Pagan atmosphere and recollections. The visit had been full of interest, and should not be omitted. In returning we had the best of our enemy: the sandstorm followed us. Once more we were under the shadow of the Cathedral, in sound of its bells. These same bells told us that the moments were passing, and presently struck the farewell hour. The train would convey us back to Stockholm. A second edition of the canal, however pleasant, would have involved an extra deep day and disturbed sundry laid plans.

The railway journey was pleasant also in its way, ran through hills and valleys, sometimes gave one glimpses of yesterday's canal Nearer Stockholm, the Malar lake came into view, intersected by fields and forests. Finally came the capital itself, with its fine entrances.

In a strange country it is pleasant to come back to streets that have grown familiar. They give you a sense of rest; almost the welcome of an old friend, a well-known face. You know what lies at the end; the exact rooms awaiting you, the people who will greet you. The glad recognition with which officials mark your return is also not without its pleasures.

From the windows of the Grand Hotel the view looked more lively than ever; water more sparkling, boats more flashing; the constant stream of passengers more animated; the palace across the water more dignified and noble. Down under the shadow of the trees, beyond the museum and the bridge, an old woman kept a fruit-stall on the very banks of the Malar. Round the corner was the crowd of masts belonging to all the shipping that could not be seen. Beyond were the distant hills that add so much to the charm of this wonderful view. Over all, gilding and gladdening all, rejoicing the heart far more than "a deep, deep draught of the good Rhine wine," was the blue ether of these sunny skies of summer.

CHAPTER XII.

JONKÖPING.

TRAVELLING southwards from Stockholm you will find Sweden a very different country from Norway, which you probably have recently visited. The great railway runs from north to south like an immense, irregular backbone of iron; and I suppose it may be called the backbone of the Scandinavian trade. Hour after hour passes, and the scenery hardly ever varies. Norway is all mountains; Sweden is flat, though neither stale nor unprofitable. It is a land of forests, lakes and rivers. You seldom come to a town or village or even a settlement; scarcely see a house. Immense solitudes, which, as far as one can tell, are likely to remain so.

The wild, rugged, romantic beauty of Norway has disappeared. From Christiania to the North Cape you have nothing but a succession of marvels and surprises and overpowering impressions. But Sweden is so different that you grow weary of it;

almost wonder what brought you there; feel almost sure nothing will take you there again. You think of *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, and also feel half inclined to exclaim: "Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?"

These Swedish plains and forests, these running rivers are delightful as a temporary sojourn, or even to possess as one's very own. Nothing can be more so. You revel in all the delights of the country; all rural sports; every influence that is morally and physically healthy. But merely to pass through them hour after hour, cribbed and confined in a prosy railway carriage—this all grows very monotonous. The landscape is there certainly, but you hear neither the running of the waters, the song of the birds, nor the murmuring of the trees. Everything is drowned in the unromantic rush of the train.

So we were glad to leave it one dark night for a short sojourn at Jonköping. A storm was raging, the spirits of the air were abroad, the waters of Lake Wettern were tempest-tossed. They were invisible, but we heard their dash against the railway embankment. Then, out of all this wilderness of darkness, came the pale rays of the lighthouse on the little pier. Next, the train steamed into the station.

We went out into the night; Egyptian darkness that might be felt. Nowhere any glimmer of lamp or lantern to help us on our benighted way. We stumbled and groped about as blind men. The hotel

porter was with us, but there was something so mysterious and uncanny about the place that we felt as if going to our doom. Presently we entered a dark plantation of trees, and were sure of it. The very elements seemed against us, as they tore about and bent and swayed the branches in mad fury. Rain fell in torrents. We could still hear the waters beating against the embankment. Two great red lights in the distance gleamed from the train, which had once more gone on its way: the fiery eyes of a demon rushing into space.

Presently, beyond the trees, appeared a few faint glimmers. There were signs of life and civilisation after all. We gathered up our courage. Our hour had not yet come for falling into the hands of men. We came out from under the trees; the sky was above us; dark and portentous it is true, but still, free and open. The wind raged and howled, and tore about like spirits of the air, but we faced it boldly. A black mass loomed ahead; a door opened, just as if our approach had been heard in all this pandemonium of the elements. We were glad to enter into shelter at any price, at all risks.

We had had a long, tiring journey; were hungry and faint and weary; tantalising fumes and odours came creeping up the corridors from a far-off kitchen. The porter gave us rooms in which we felt more lost than ever. The two together would have formed a goodly-sized church. I think we counted fifteen windows in them. The atmosphere was sepulchral.

Candles merely lighted up the darkness, and threw ghostly shadows which made one's flesh creep. The wind rattled and raged against the fifteen casements, and drowned our voices. Every now and then it sank to a momentary wail, like the sighing of a distressed spirit seeking admission, only to rise up the next instant with seven-fold force. There was a piano in the room, black and upright as a sarcophagus. Inspired by the elements, we sent forth a wild pæan in their honour, and woke echoes in the four corners of the chamber; crude harmonies and abrupt modulations to which the winds lent a fitting accompaniment.

But the dining-room below was brilliantly lighted and by no means deserted. The sparkling cup went round in small and separate circles, for there were many tables and many parties. And they laughed and "quaffed the muscadel," and pledged each other in deep, deep draughts. And the howling of the winds outside, and the beating of the rain upon the windows, seemed to lose their melancholy.

Next morning the scene had changed. Jonköping by daylight was presentable and favoured in many ways. The storm had gone down, the sky was very blue, the sunshine very bright and warm. The waters of the lake spread out before us had ceased to rage. There was a small and very pretty harbour, and, at the end of the pier, the lighthouse that last night had flashed its rays into the Egyptian darkness. It was curious to find all these sea marks and tokens

so far inland. But these lakes are nothing less than small seas, and on rough days a steamer will be as tempest-tossed as if on the wide ocean, with a motion more disagreeable and dangerous than any to be found on wider waters.

Before the hotel was the canal which ends its existence in Lake Wettern. Or, rather, there are large locks here which prevent its doing so. Thus, Jonköping seems almost surrounded by water. This morning an excursion boat was getting up steam. It was crowded with people going off for a day's pleasure to Wisingsö, a small island on the lake, some two or three hours distant. The usual flags abounded; also the brass band; and the crowd laughed and talked, and enjoyed life in their easy, careless fashion, living for the hour and the day. Few wants, small responsibilities, no anxieties. Acting up to the old French song, "Donnez moi vos vingt ans, si vous n'en faites rien," they make the most of all their years.

The decks were crowded, and still they came, for it was Sunday. At last the boat passed through the locks into the little harbour, between the piers, out on to the broad waters of the lake, which is some eighty miles long and fifteen miles broad. A grand shout from those on board and from those on shore as she parted from the land; a great display of handkerchiefs, and prolonged farewells, as if she had been going off to a new world and a new life. Then everyone scattered in a listless, leisurely manner, which

seemed to say that the excursionists now on the broad lake had the best of it.

Jonköping is divided into the old and the new town, and the canal separates one from the other. The new part is more pretentious, less picturesque than the old. Long straight thoroughfares, built after a certain set plan and pattern; square houses of grey stone, surrounded by gardens and murmuring trees to redeem them from the utterly commonplace; public buildings, large and important, proved that Jonköping in its way is thrifty and flourishing.

In the new part, on the banks of the lake, you come to the manufactory of matches, a small settlement in itself, giving work to an immense number of hands. To-day the place was closed, silence reigned, no smoke came forth from the tall chimneys. On week-days it is equally closed to strangers, but there are signs and sounds of life in all quarters, and the quays are lined with bales and boxes of matches waiting to go out into the world, a large proportion finding their way to England.

Jonköping also does a large trade in wood and iron and corn. There are ironworks in the neighbourhood, and you may walk out to some of them beside rushing streams and hurrying torrents. The surrounding country is very fertile, and yields large quantities of grain. So Jonköping has much in its favour, and many industries to bring it prosperity.

The old part of the town is much more Scandinavian in appearance, more quaint and primitive, yet

without any special feature for praise and recommendation. The houses are built of wood, and have the pleasant look all these Swedish wooden towns possess.

Service was going on in the church. A sermon was being patiently and devotionally listened to, but as one of us had "no Swedish" we quietly went out again. There were shady trees about the church, and a few people were seated on the benches beneath them, possibly reading *their* sermon in the stones and rustling leaves. Only a few yards beyond, the blue waters of the lake plashed warmly and lazily against the embankment. This large inland sea to-day was full of beauty and kindliness, and Jonköping owes to it much of its attraction. Beyond the town and the canal, rising hills also add their charm to the scene; hills musical with running waters and rich in pine forests. Jonköping we could fancy a very pleasant place for a long sojourn. There is plenty of fishing in the neighbourhood, endless excursions far and near, but for a flying visit a day seems almost sufficient.

For ourselves, we came to it in darkness, and we left it in darkness. But it greeted us with storm and tempest, dismissed us with calm. The sky was clear, the stars gave us their benediction.

CHAPTER XIII.

COPENHAGEN.

AGAIN on a certain night, we found ourselves travelling southward from Stockholm. As long as daylight lasted it was always the same description of scenery; and when daylight returned, it was still the same. Flat, endless pastures and forests, with now and then a river or lake to break the monotony. Immense tracts of country pleasant to look upon, but never raising one to enthusiasm or the smallest excitement.

At four in the morning we stopped at a small station, where a few sleepy travellers turned out eagerly for coffee and rolls, all looking more or less as if they had seen a ghost, or suffered from nightmare. The human form abroad on its travels at four in the morning is not at its best. The lords of creation are then hardly in a condition to assert their supremacy. But they have the consolation of knowing that the ladies of creation would present

a yet sorrier figure if they would only show themselves.

We had been up since two o'clock, surveying Nature from the open stage outside the sleeping car; watching the sun rise, the dews disperse, the gradual awakening of this world of still life, through which the train rushed like a whirlwind, raising clouds of provoking dust. We were not taken at a disadvantage; some people never are; and were ready and grateful for the coffee and rolls, which put new life into one, and were worth their weight in gold. The damsels who supplied them were ministering spirits. The sleepy travellers stumbled back to their uneasy couches for a little more sleep and a little more slumber; we returned to our stage, and the train went on.

Presently we came to Lund, second University town in Sweden, which has had a great and flourishing past, and was a Bishopric in the twelfth century. In the midst of its wide, uninteresting, but fertile plain, we traced the long course of a winding river. Not far from the station the cathedral rose conspicuously above the houses of the town. It looked interesting, and made us half wish we had broken our journey here. But the train passed on, and we with it, and at last reached Malmö, where the steamer starts for Copenhagen.

Again it was Sunday. For it is not always possible in travelling to make Sunday a day of rest, especially in these Northern latitudes, where trains and boats

are not very frequent, and where you perhaps have a dozen "correspondences" in a long journey. We soon found that it was anything but a day of rest here.

Malmö itself is a busy seaport, given over to trade and shipping, situated on the Sound running between it and Copenhagen, which is about sixteen miles across. Its long quays, full of merchandise and timber, are bustling and noisy enough on week-days, but to-day were released from work. Yet in the hot sunshine it looked lively and interesting, after the manner of all docks and harbours filled with shipping, all signs and tokens of the rare happiness and freedom of ocean life.

The steamer for Copenhagen was crowded with people going over for the day. There was scarcely standing room on board, and one hesitated about adding to the number. But Malmö is hardly the place to linger in on a Sunday, unless you have special reasons for doing so. Moreover, after a long and tiring journey of sixteen or seventeen hours, one longed for such a resting-place as would alone be found in Copenhagen. In Malmö there was nothing to detain or attract one. It is famous as having once held Bothwell, the husband of Mary Queen of Scots, who was imprisoned here, and subsequently died in Denmark; but all its old fortifications have disappeared, and nothing remains but the ancient castle.

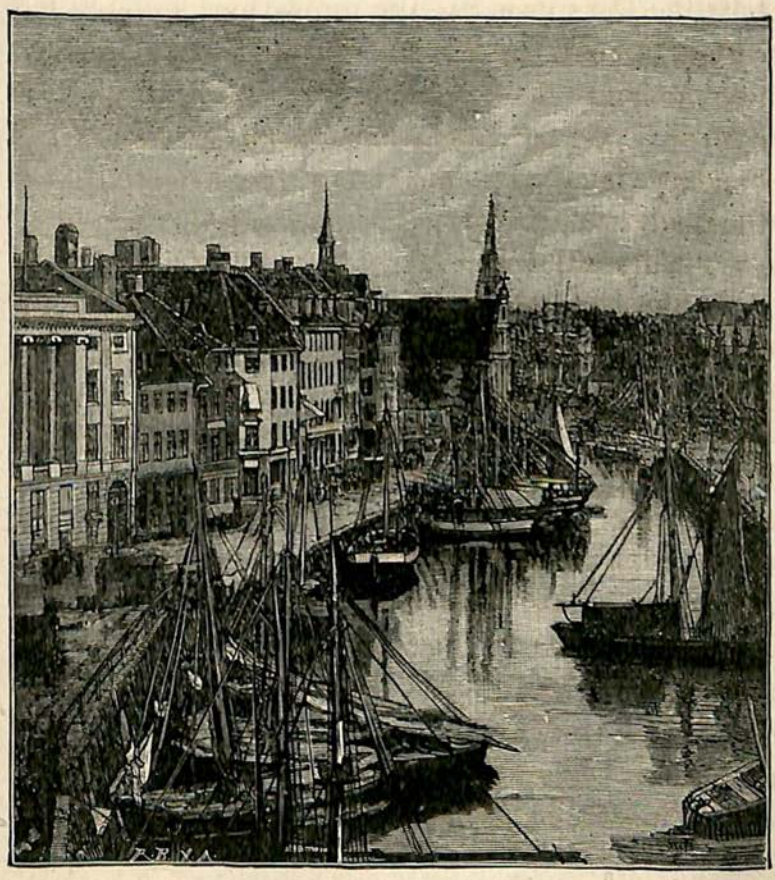
The journey across to Copenhagen occupies about

an hour and a half. To-day the sea was calm as a painted ocean. It ran up between the lands, and flashed and glittered in the sunshine of one of the hottest days that had been known for years. This made no difference to the crowd on board, who seemed to revel in it. Smoking was universal, so were laughing and talking; "a merry band of brothers," knit together by the common interest of enjoyment and making the most of a summer holiday; ces beaux jours de la vie, when all the world is young and all the trees are green.

As far as it was possible under the circumstances, we enjoyed the run across. The approach to Copenhagen was imposing. It appeared what it really is, a fine and flourishing capital. The steamer passed down amidst a crowd of shipping, endless quays, one landing-stage after another. Here and there a man-of-war, lying at anchor, looked like a great yacht on pleasure bent rather than a vessel meant for battle. The officers were evidently the essence of coolness and infinite leisure. Life on board must be very pleasant. The steeples and towers of Copenhagen rose conspicuously above its houses, and, as we approached, there was a sound of bells in the air.

At length the steamer reached its landing-stage, distinguished by an army of porters, a long black shed which served as a Custom House, and a string of carriages for hire. Some of the men came on board, and one of them seizing our luggage, dis-

appeared like a flash of lightning, making off with it in such a manner that one might have fancied he had qualified for the society of Ali Babi and the Forty



COPENHAGEN.

Thieves. We followed, but lost sight of him, until, at the Custom House door, he came down upon us as an eagle upon its prey. He must have been observant

too, for though we knew him not, he had not the slightest doubt about us.

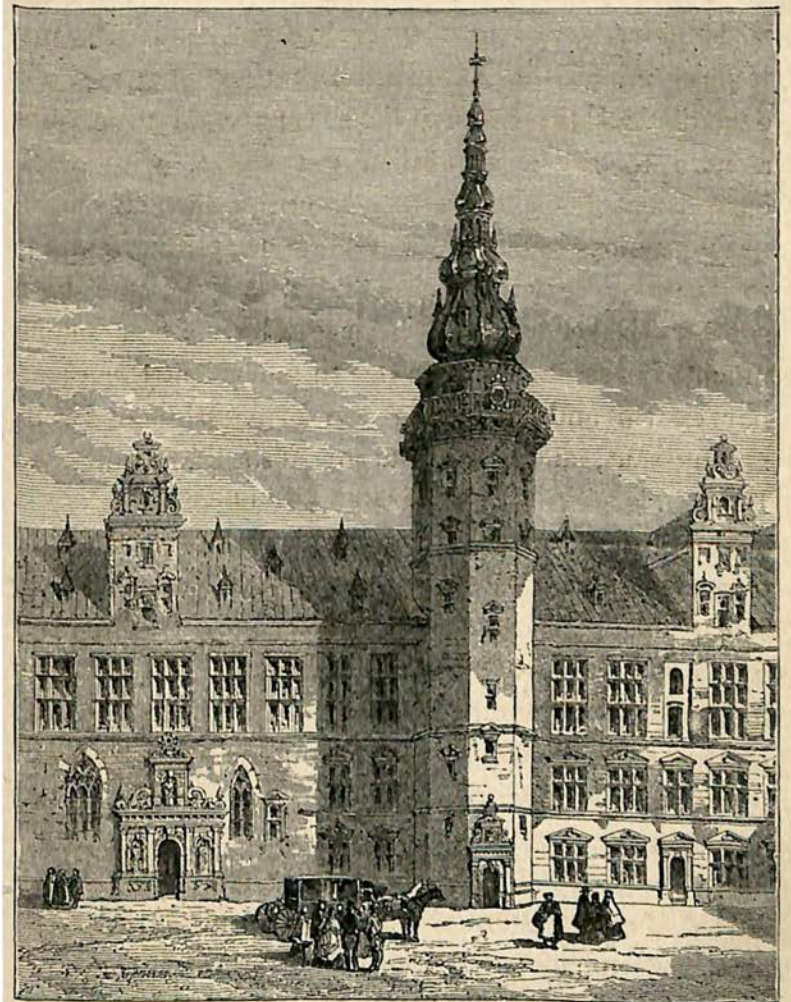
The place was full of luggage, though we had thought ourselves almost the only passengers on board. The Custom House people were as fussy and careful as the French in their examinations; insisted upon going to the bottom of everything; marked off each package with chalk, without which charm handbags and all other things were turned back at the door.

Finally we were free and rolling in an open droschke through the town. We have a conscious feeling that this sounds more dignified than it looked. Words, it is said, were given to conceal thought, and with the best intentions in the world it is not always possible to place an exact picture before the reader's eye. Nevertheless it is certain that we were rolling in an open droschke through the town. We had a pair of horses to our carriage, and a coachman in livery. 'We will pass over the appointments in silence; the reader will imagine them perfect.

From the first moment you are enlisted in favour of Copenhagen. It is well-built and bright, and almost reminds one of a small Paris or Brussels. That you are in neither one nor the other is evident by the names over the doors and the unfamiliar tongue spoken around you.

It is equally certain that you are not in Sweden. There is a great difference between Sweden and

Denmark, though in times past they have been so intimately connected, and though they lie so close to



DANISH CHÂTEAU.

each other. A subtle change has come over everything; you hardly know in what it consists. About

the Danes themselves there is more animation than about the Swedes. They are lighter; freer in their movements; quicker in perception if you converse with them. They are better looking, and in many ways resemble the English. But they possess their own distinct type, and it is a very good type. As a race they are well-built, yet slight, with well-carved features and pleasant expressions. They are very prepossessing; and seeing that this applies to the middle classes generally, it is found to a greater degree in the higher grades. After seeing much of Denmark one ceases to marvel at the peculiar charm and beauty of the Princess who dwells amongst us, and who is at once so Danish and so English.

Once clear of the steamer and the quay we found ourselves in comparative quiet, for it was Sunday. The shops were closed and the streets were in peace. There was a Sunday air, an English and familiar look, about Copenhagen. We felt that we should like it, and that a sojourn here would be very pleasant. It was a peculiarly bright day, and the heat, we have already said, was tropical.

We were glad to come to an anchor at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, which has the reputation of being the best in Denmark and one of the best in Europe. It is also well situated on the chief square of Copenhagen, facing the Royal Théatre and other fine buildings. A tramway runs through the square, and a stream of foot passengers constantly passing to and fro make

it very animated. Anyone wishing to indulge in the Pleasures of Melancholy must forswear these quarters.

The houses about Copenhagen are most of them modern, but every now and then you come upon an

THEATRE ROYAL, COPENHAGEN.

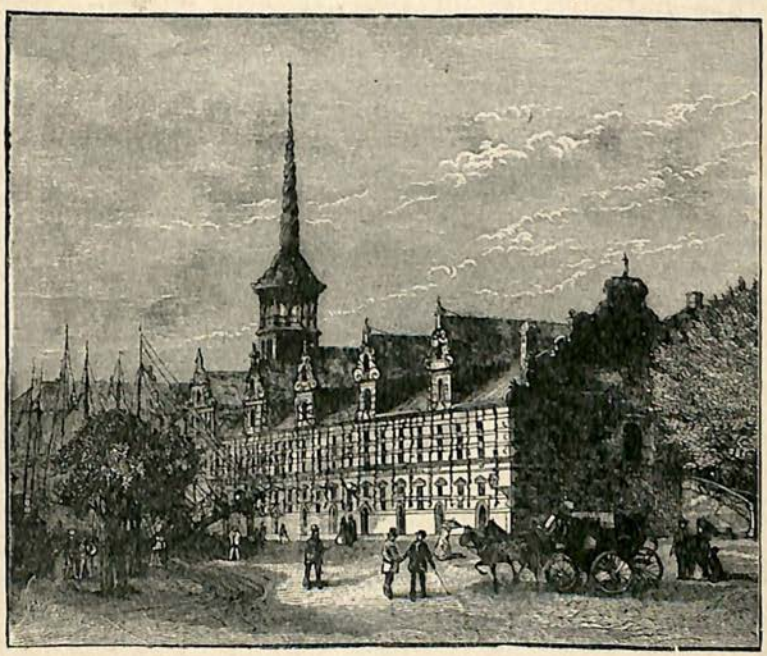
ancient building which charms you the more that it is a rare discovery. Under many of the houses cellars are turned into tempting fruit shops. Up the steps and through the open, wide-winged doors there comes forth an irresistible scent of raspberries and strawberries. The fruit is cunningly displayed in

rich heaps, and the announcement of "Strawberries and cream" in best Danish seals your fate. You throw dignity to the winds and go down. At the bottom you knock against last night's neighbour at the table d'hôte. You were then both of you as sensible and reasonable and dignified as possible; had nothing to do with life's frivolities; were strong-minded, philosophical, metaphysical. It is all over now. You have discovered a mutual weakness; gaze at each other in a shamefaced sort of way; look guilty and found out. Then you make the best of it and laugh. Your neighbour, who has been wanting a second plate all the time, but would not ask for it, takes heart of grace, goes back, and has it with you. Stolen pleasures are sweet.

Opposite to one of these cellars was the Round Tower, dating back to the year 1642. It is 115 feet high, and a winding roadway between the outer wall and the inner cylinder, a broad, spiral inclined plane, takes you to the summit. Up this went the Empress Catherine of Russia, in 1716, in a carriage and four, preceded by Peter the Great on horseback. And up it we went in 1885, but without carriage or mounted herald. Yet we did there what probably Catherine did not do: on that height, overlooking the whole town and the surrounding country, opened and read a budget of home letters just received from the Post Office that would have rejoiced the heart even of an empress.

From this tower the whole town lies mapped

before you, with all its churches, museums, and famous buildings. You see that it is built upon two islands, and on all sides the blue waters sparkle in the sunshine. There are long, pale reaches of water afar off, and quays and harbours near at hand



TOWN HALL, COPENHAGEN.

crowded with shipping. To-day, Sunday, all flags are flying, and the vessels and the sea are lively and exhilarating. Far away across the Sound stretch the long, flat shores of Sweden, a faint line almost lost in the hazy distance. You look again and again to see whether it is really land, or only a long, thin,

vaporous cloud in the sky, or merely the horizon itself.

Across there, on a small island, surrounded by the harbour, is Christianborg Palace, built and destroyed and rebuilt several times over in the last seven hundred years. The present one, restored in 1828, has never been a royal residence, but is a fine edifice with magnificent rooms, and much that is worth notice in the way of sculpture and decoration. Farther away, in a different direction, lies Klampenborg, one of the watering-places to be visited from Copenhagen. A short railway journey takes you to it. Here you may spend the day, dine at one of the restaurants, and observe life as it is found at a Danish seaside place. The bathing in that warm, blue, sparkling sea is excellent, and you begin to think there are attractions here hardly to be found in Copenhagen itself.

But Copenhagen is rich in many things. Thorvaldsen's Museum alone is a treasure, containing many of the great sculptor's works, and many models of his works. In the centre of a Pompeian-like court Thorvaldsen himself finds his last resting-place. A flat stone covered with ivy, surrounded by a marble border, marks the grave. It is a curious idea, and yet one easily understood. He lies in the centre of the great city, his home for many years, amidst the people he loved and who loved him and did him homage. Everyone entering his museum pays the tribute of a visit to his grave, where you

almost seem to realise his presence. And here you find not only much of his work, but many of the pictures and other objects of art that he collected during his lifetime and bequeathed to the city.

You cannot help lingering in this museum. If

FREDERIKSBORG CASTLE.

you are staying long in Copenhagen you return to it over and over again. You revel in the work of the sculptor, his vivid imagination, powers of conception, designs at once chaste and vigorous. An atmosphere of beauty and refinement about the place charms the

mind and seduces one; not by the voice, like the Sirens of Caprea who lured their victims into the blue waters of the Mediterranean by the power of Song; but by the almost equally seductive power of Form. You could wish that there was more of Thorvaldsen's actual work and less of facsimile in the way of models; nevertheless you are so influenced by the collection that it becomes inseparable with your memories of the capital. A refinement of thought and feeling, which somehow seems to be a heritage of the people, who possess both outwardly and mentally a good deal of natural grace.

Copenhagen is rich in other museums. The Ethnographical Museum and the Museum of Northern Antiquities are full of interest and are almost unequalled. The former is a museum of comparison, showing the difference between savage tribes and civilisation. More especially it shows the progress and development of civilisation from very early times, and in nations that were not Scandinavian. Days would be required to exhaust its treasures, and only those who have some acquaintance with the subject can appreciate the labour and skill and time bestowed upon their selection and classification.

So with the collection of Northern Antiquities, which again shows the progress of civilisation and the features and characteristics of the different ages: the three epochs of stone, bronze, and iron. Here also it requires familiarity with the subject to enter into it intelligently. It is a study interesting to all,

but especially to the geologist and the antiquarian. This collection is the largest in the world, and is especially rich in its display of gold ornaments.

From room to room you may trace the different periods and transitions. You pass from the age of

KRONBORG CASTLE.

rough stone to that of polished; from the age of bronze to the age of iron. You come to the room of runic stones, which brings you up to the tenth century and the commencement of the middle ages, finally reaching the Renaissance period. These latter rooms with their treasures will appeal most to the ordinary visitor, who will find more beauty in carved

shields and ivory ornaments, silver altars and jewelled cups, than in brazen vessels and Pagan monuments. An interesting object was the watch of Tycho Brahe, the astronomer, ancestor of the present owners of Skokloster and its art treasures, where it almost seemed this watch should also be. Large and curious, it marks the progress that has been made in things not formed of stone, or bronze, or iron.

Copenhagen is not rich in churches as far as their beauty is concerned. The chief one is the Vor Frue Kirke, a modern edifice of Roman architecture. A well-proportioned building, plain and simple, but rich in possessing the figure of our Saviour at the altar, which Thorvaldsen, it is said, considered his masterpiece.

Down the church, six on each side, are the twelve Apostles. Every one a study in itself, a work of wonderful vigour and beauty. You almost feel as if gazing upon sculpture for the first time. It is life petrified into stone.

A feeling of devotion runs through all. In the figure of our Saviour the spiritual influence has been so well caught by the great workman that you seem to be looking upon the more than human. No other sculptor has ever succeeded so well in this most important element. One almost feels that Thorvaldsen, like Fra Angelico, must have worked upon his knees, and that his mind undoubtedly was in a frame of highest devotion. He must have had the utmost

reverence for his subject as well as love for his work.

The very simplicity of the church, the unadorned walls, add much to the effect of these sculptures. Entering from the west end you are at once arrested by the figure at the far east, which seems to be pronouncing upon you the benediction of the Good Shepherd. You have suddenly passed from the noisy traffic of the streets into a region of perfect rest. It appears almost like the living representation of the scene that took place eighteen centuries ago. A moment since you were in the noisy, turbulent pulses of the world, now you are in a great calm, and almost fancy you hear once again the words, "Peace, be still," that for eighteen hundred years have stirred all hearts. As with Thorvaldsen's museum, if you are making any stay in Copenhagen you will insensibly be drawn to this church over and over again, will study these works, and love them the more the oftener they are seen.

Most beautiful also is the group of St. John preaching in the wilderness, over the portico of the west front. Every figure here is again a study of extreme grace and beauty impossible to surpass. There are other subjects within the church, such as the Angel of the Font; but none of it can be realised by a mere description. A church existed here as far back as the twelfth century, but it was destroyed in the eighteenth. Then another of great magnificence arose in its place, which was destroyed by the

English when they besieged Copenhagen at the beginning of this century, and half ruined it.

The town as it exists to-day has a bright and animated look, partly due perhaps to the clear atmosphere and blue sky. The houses are tall and straight, and generally narrow. Most conspicuous and attractive amongst the shops are those which display the Danish porcelain and hand-painted pottery, and the chaste models of Thorvaldsen's works.

Canals run through some of the thoroughfares, often crowded with shipping, adding very much to the liveliness of the town, and giving it occasionally a Dutch-like appearance. This is especially the case in front of the Exchange: a large, long building of great attraction, in the Dutch Renaissance style, built in the seventeenth century, but recently restored. The spire is curiously formed by the bodies and tails of four dragons or serpents twisted together, with heads turned downwards to the four points of the compass. With this building on one hand, and the canal with its shipping and bustling quays on the other, you might almost fancy yourself in Holland.

Copenhagen both in itself and its neighbourhood is rich in palaces, and all should be visited, for all possess special points of attraction. In one of the parks is a statue of Hans Christian Andersen, whose charmingly ugly face seems to be smiling benignantly upon the world of youth, of whom he will ever be the

delight. But a smiling mood was not always his to enjoy. We know that he was troubled with a sensitiveness and self-conciousness that almost amounted to vanity, inclined him to morbid moods and seasons, and a certain irritable impatience which must have caused him much suffering and sorrow. It could not be otherwise with an organisation so delicate, a mind and imagination so pure. In perfect harmony with youth and innocence, possessing the spirit of a child with the thoughts of maturity, he was out of harmony with all the influences of the grown-up world around him. He lived in a world of his own, and was unfitted to come into contact with any other. His own world was a fairy-land, all sunshine and pathos and magic. What bond of union could such a spirit discover in a world of realities? His body lies in a churchyard not far off, but his soul has taken flight to those regions where alone it could find the food and companionship it needed; innocence of youth, eternal sunshine, the delights of a land beyond all he ever imagined.

But Copenhagen possesses other influences than these. Its most popular rendezvous is Tivoli, which on summer nights, when the trees are pleasantly "umbrageous," is crowded by the inhabitants. It is a famous place with all sorts of attractions. Excellent bands indoors and out of doors; small theatres, whose pieces and acting do not call for particular praise; performing dogs and dancing bears; an electric railway; all kinds of amusements which, if

harmless enough, have that air of *abandon* and frivolity which is not of the healthiest description. But as water will not rise above its own level, so the amusements supplied meet the demand. The mind and moods of man are not always in a state of exaltation; perhaps the greater part of them know nothing of aspirations, or ever dream of "rising on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things."

So night after night and year after year Tivoli is crowded and popular. And if the amusement took an elevating turn and went in for pictures, taste, Shakespeare, and the musical glasses, its winding walks, and shaded alleys, and miniature islands would soon be left to the bats and the owls.

There are innumerable excursions from Copenhagen, far and near. Its quays crowded with steamers are not the least interesting of its walks. These steamers will take you to all parts of the world. You may go round the coast of Sweden, either up the Cattegat or through the Baltic, touching at all sorts of interesting places. You may visit the different islands of the Baltic, and so often come upon almost untrodden ground. When we found ourselves in the island of Bornholm, with all its beauty and attraction, I was the only Englishman who had been there for some time.

So was it again in Gotland: that wonderful place, with its crowd of ruins gilded by flashing skies and glowing sunsets: the town of Wisby, which has no rival, yet is so little known.

A long sojourn may be passed very pleasantly in Copenhagen, with all sorts of changes and varieties for many days. At the Hôtel d'Angleterre you will find yourself in excellent quarters. The house is well conducted, light, and cheerful. The table d'hôte is good, and after it you may take your coffee in the covered courtyard, and admire the trailing creepers and the decorated walls. You must have a little patience with the waiters, who are slow, and in the breakfast-room a little too much left to themselves. But where will you find absolute perfection? Not in this lower world, and not this side the millennium.

Let us repeat once more, there are certain places which attract you at once, just as there are certain people. You hardly know why or wherefore, and it is sometimes lost labour to try to analyse the feeling. It was so with Copenhagen, and we should always return to it with pleasure. For Sweden we have no such sentiment; but the very sound of Norway again stirs up thoughts, and feelings, and emotions that the æsthetic would call "intense," and we will leave the reader to imagine for himself. Whatever is to him most delightful: whatever exhilarates him and raises from his shoulders the load of daily life and the accumulated memories of sin and suffering and sorrow; the anguish of heart known only to himself; the sleepless pillow and the sick awakenings: whatever causes him to forget all these and for a moment raises him to dreams of happiness

and a sense of freedom for which language has no word, such to us is the very sound of Norway.

But we are wandering from our subject, even as we must now wander from Copenhagen. Not up the Cattegat towards the iron-bound shores of the midnight sun, but downwards into the Baltic.

CHAPTER XIV.

BORNHOLM.

WE left Copenhagen one fair evening for Bornholm, an island of the Baltic. The little steamer loosed her moorings about five o'clock, and passed through the crowd of shipping never absent from the broad waters and endless quays of the Danish capital. We gradually fell away from the many features of the town, now grown friendly and familiar: towers and domes and steeples; and public buildings that here and there reared their magnificent heads above their lesser surrounding lights.

We went down in broad sunshine. Past light-houses, and Danish men-of-war, and windmills that stood out conspicuously against the evening sky, and reminded one of the flat shores of Holland. All this faded away, and gave place to the equally flat shores of Sweden. The sun set in a gorgeous bank of clouds. Twilight crept over the earth, colours faded from the sky, and stars came out. It never grew quite dark.

The night was so still and beautiful, it seemed impossible to turn in. Lights flashed from vessels going to and fro, from numberless fishing craft, those "toilers of the sea" who earn their daily bread by night. The passage was supposed to take ten or twelve hours, and we ought to reach Rönne, the chief town of Bornholm, at four or five in the morning. About half way, when daylight had fled, we passed the steamer coming from Rönne. Signals and greetings were exchanged, and each vessel went her way.

The night wore on. A light broke in the east. Beams darted upwards like an Aurora Borealis. A mountain of fire seemed to be gradually rising above the horizon. Nothing more gorgeous could be imagined. This was long before the sun rose like a chariot wheel, flooding and flaming the sky with a sea of gold, liquid, shifting, ebbing and flowing, as it were, in pulsations of light. The skipper of the little steamer was concerned for our welfare, and thought an hour's sleep worth all the effects of Nature that ever were seen. Mountains of light and gorgeous colourings were all very well in their way, but sleep was better. He spoke a little English, and like most of the skippers in these Northern seas, was anxious to do everything in his power for the comfort of his passengers, especially if they were strangers in the land. When he found we had only three days to devote to Bornholm he was full of regret, and advised us to prolong the time if possible.

COPENHAGEN.

"You will see it," he said, "and that is all. Your plan must be to hire a carriage for the three days, which will just manage to take you round the island and show you its chief features. But a week would have been well devoted to this interesting spot."

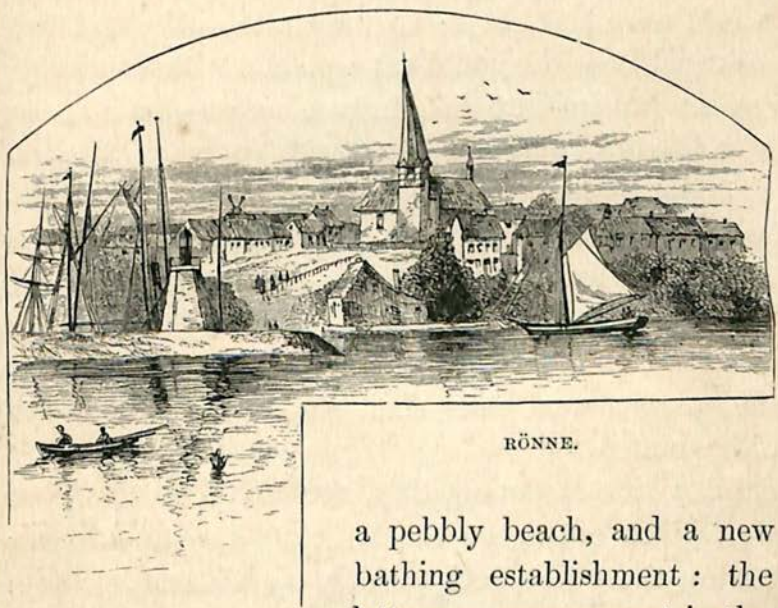
We afterwards found that though, in those three days we saw everything the island contained, yet a week might very profitably have been spent lingering and lounging quietly about the beauties of Bornholm.

About three o'clock in the morning the flat coast of the island opened up, and an hour later, in the full blaze of sunrise, we steamed into the little harbour.

The town looked quaint and primitive, uncommon and unsophisticated. A collection of small houses, red slanting roofs, windmills, and a solitary church spire. There was little shipping in the harbour. Everything was on a small scale, including the lighthouse, that some time ago was found to be inconveniently placed, and was removed bodily some fifty yards lower down. The first impression was singularly pleasant. There was an individuality about the place that was very refreshing. We had seen nothing like it before, and were evidently out of the world's beaten track. All this promised well for our three days.

We were soon alongside. The skipper beckoned to a decent-looking man, who took charge of our traps and led the way. Aurora was still abroad,

and we made acquaintance with Rönne in the first flush and beauty of early morning. The streets were quiet and deserted. The houses, small and built of wood painted many colours, were clean and fresh looking. Our way led through the poorer part of the town, given up to fishermen and labourers. To the left a steep decline ended in a timber yard,



RÖNNE.

a pebbly beach, and a new bathing establishment: the latter an arrangement in the form of a roughly-built stage of loose planks some fifty yards long, leading to a number of little floating rooms all under one roof. This was in charge of a good woman, who surprised us by her ready English, until we found that she had spent many years in America. There she had made money and returned to her native country when attacked in middle age

by the mal du pays. Who is it says that in middle age all the failings of early youth return with tenfold force? And if it be so, it is the last throw of the Arch Enemy laying wait for man's soul? Then let the fight be sharp, and quick the victory.

This good woman was wise in her generation. She had not crossed the sea and dwelt in the tents of the stranger for nothing. Her experiences in the new world were brought to bear upon the old; and she charged E.—who could not see water without a longing to plunge into his native element—for his one bath the price of half a dozen, with the most innocent air. For presently, whilst I waited and looked about, and revelled in the lapping water and all the signs of a primitive and quiet life, up came a bevy of fair and quite fashionable girls, who paid collectively the amount that E. had given for his solitary plunge. No; the woman was wiser than she looked; we were disappointed.

But this is anticipating, for our first devotions were given not to the beach, but to the hotel. Following the guide, and turning up a street, pebbly-paved and grass-grown, we dived under a great gateway into an old-fashioned courtyard. It might have come into existence centuries ago. A low building with slanting roofs and latticed windows, and overhanging verandahs, beautiful from very age, where creepers trailed and twined and hung in wild and graceful profusion. Once within the house, all beauty and picturesqueness disappeared. The rooms were

dark and uncomfortable, and not even particularly clean. But behind the house was a garden ; a wilderness of roses and other flowers ; a cultivated desert, full of brilliant blossoms and tantalising fruit trees—for the currants were all picked, and the cherries were not ripe.

The people of the inn were not more satisfactory. They were disobliging in manner, unreasonable in charging ; the only instance we met with on all the island. Everywhere else the people were moderate, civil, and hospitable ; would put themselves out of the way for you, and often refused any return for a service rendered.

Happily we had not many hours to devote to Rönne, though the inn people tried their best to detain us. First they declared no carriage was to be had. This excuse disposed of, the porter, who was head-waiter, boots, and general factotum all rolled into one, disappeared ; to return presently with a driver, and an extraordinary vehicle, that was half hay-cart, and half a platform on wheels ; a sort of French camion. In such an arrangement the hardiest traveller would soon have been reduced to a jelly. Then Jehu, seeing that his way was not to be our way, rattled off with his shandaradan, for which he substituted a very decent landau ; and we departed in comfort, if not in state.

Thus commenced our three days' drive through Bornholm ; one of the most charming drives imaginable—three of the pleasantest days anyone could

possibly desire. The weather was worthy of Paradise. Unclouded sunshine and blue skies enlivened our way, and gilded the laughing hours. Everything favoured us. Jehu, finding he was not to have things his own way, quietly gave in to ours, and became a devoted slave, amiable and obliging. In the end, it is true, he lost his character by charging half as much again as his bargain, and with the inn people to back him it had to be paid, under protest. We could not lose our boat and remain behind for the sake of resisting an unjust demand. But it was evident he had been put up to his dishonesty by the porter, and the two finally went off to a quiet corner to divide the spoil.

Our first day's drive was also one of the most memorable. Bornholm is a scene of overflowing fertility and abundance. Every one seemed prosperous. Everywhere barns were filled with plenty, and presses burst out with new wine. We were for ever meeting great waggon-loads of hay piled high; fresh, crisp, and sweet smelling. Everywhere there were fields of waving, ripening golden corn. We had hardly ever seen their equal. The cherry orchards were legion, and the cherries had only one drawback. They were ripe, luscious, inexhaustible, but generally grew out of reach of ordinary mortals. It was vain to ape the fox in the fable; there could be nothing sour about those large, red, glorious berries. Bornholm was veritably a Paradise; a Canaan amidst islands; a land of corn and wine, and no less of roses than of cherries.

We soon left the town behind us and found ourselves in the midst of this fertile country. Roads, long and straight, wonderfully well-made and well-kept, facilitated one's progress. Our way led somewhat inland, and the sea to the left was seldom visible.

By mid-day we had reached Hasle, our first halting place: a small, primitive village chiefly given over to fishermen. The waters of the Baltic plashed within a few feet of its houses; the brown, sloping, pebbly beach was lively with fishing-boats drawn up high and dry above the tide. Not very much could be said for some of the cottage interiors. They were dark and gloomy, brown and discoloured, as if by constant peat fires whose smoke had no way of escape. To look in at some of the open doorways satisfied one's curiosity without exploring further. Half-dressed children played about the doorsteps, where also lounged mothers and sisters, talking with a gravity which seemed a part of their nature, and staring with great, enquiring eyes at the wayfarers. Some of them were stooping over a washing-tub just inside the doorway; and others, grey-headed old women, whose sun had long passed its meridian, knitting stockings, looked up without pausing in their work. But all were distinguished—men, women, and children, clothes and skin and general aspect—by a dark brown tinge, as if they, too, as well as their little homes, had become tanned by peat smoke. It threw a certain picturesque colouring over all;

an artistic effect pleasant to contemplate upon paper, but not so pleasant in close and familiar contact. We called it the Brown Village, and it left upon us a curious and not by any means disagreeable impression.

The inn was decent, the people were civil. The house was quiet and clean, and we were in solitary possession. It was not much more than a cottage on a large scale, but the good people placed before us a meal that was far better than we had expected, was decently served, and dressed with that savoury cunning none possess so well as those primitive cooks who, living in out-of-the-way places, are often thrown upon their resources, and have to make much out of little. Necessity is the mother of invention. One thing we often noticed in these remote little inns. The people, when asked for the bill, never seemed to know what to charge, but hesitated and demurred, and evidently went through some painful mental problem. Whether considering how much they might ask, or how little would repay them, one never knew, but as we were always satisfied with their answers, they shall have the benefit of the doubt.

This inn also had its garden, well stocked with fruit and flowers, but also a sort of cultivated wilderness. It sloped downwards to brown sheds and boathouses and the beach, where the quiet sea broke lazily over the stones with a soothing, sleepy sound.

But we had a long walk before us to keep us in a state of consciousness. After leaving Hasle, the quiet little brown thoroughfares and all the brown

people; after picking a rose in the garden, and satisfying the hesitating but moderate claims of the inn people; Jehu came round at the appointed moment in great style; energy and vigour in man and horses. Evidently all their rest had not been spent in idleness. Away we went, followed by numerous gazers, brown-faced, brown-eyed, intensely serious; all with a silence of speech and attitude we interpreted into a benediction.

Jehu drove to a point beyond which no carriage could pass: a large white farm-house, substantially built, with great barns and stables and out-houses. It looked lonely and deserted. Everyone was away working in distant fields, making and carrying hay. Here we left the carriage to continue its way inland, on the high road to Hammeren, the extreme point of the island. Our way led by the sea, over the wonderful cliffs of Bornholm.

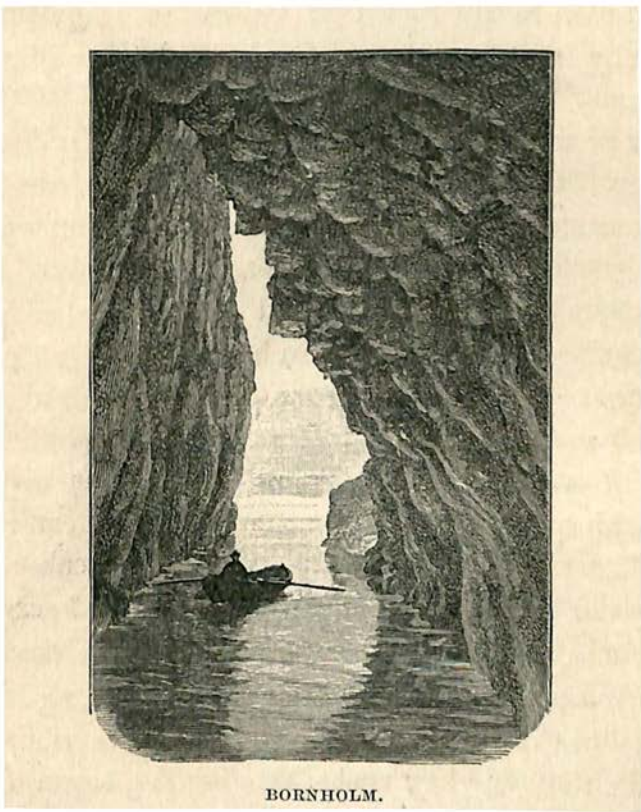
So we parted company. Jehu whipped up his horses and went clattering down the road in a cloud of dust and consequence. We passed beyond the farm-buildings and found ourselves on long stretches of greensward, inexpressibly refreshing after the hot white road we had lately travelled. Sheep grazed and wandered at will, the very emblem of stupidity and peace and contentment. We found ourselves overlooking the Baltic, far above the level of the sea, to right and left the high cliffs and the broken, beautiful coast of this favoured island. Small fishing boats, with brown sails, here and there upon the

water, suggested Hasle, but for the most part it was a clear, unbroken surface; a painted ocean; sea, horizon and sky all mingling in one far-off hazy distance.

The coast was broken and diversified even more than most rocky coasts. It stretched out in points, and circled in bays, and swept round in crescents; a scene and series of magnificent rocks, often arching upwards like the fluted pillars and aisles of a cathedral. Small alcoves and recesses became harbours of refuge, where boats were drawn up safe and sure from the perils of winds and waves. Seagulls flew from point to point across these vast amphitheatres, whirling and clanging, and filling the air with their wild cries, diving in and out of the holes and crevices of the rocks. It was a wild scene. The free air was about us, bracing, exhilarating, health-giving as we had yet found it nowhere under these Northern skies. Nor anywhere had we seen such a view, or revelled in such a walk. Wild, deserted, out of the world, away from all sight and sound of civilisation.

Moors stretched above us, green and undulating. Our path lay at the edge of the cliff, so little trodden that it was often lost amongst the gorse and heather that grew around. We found ourselves overhanging deep precipices, perpendicular walls of mighty stone, hollowed and honeycombed, that stretched down to the rugged beach. One longed for a rough sea and a rushing wind, for the furious dash of waves

beating and breaking against those mighty bulwarks. What a glorious sight it would be, though safer as we had it to-day. This pathway, exposed and insecure, was not too easy to follow, and in a tempest would be almost impassable.



BORNHOLM.

Then came "St. John's Chapel;" an almost perpendicular descent in the rocks by means of rough steps, partly of wood, partly cut out of the rock; a sort of Jacob's ladder. On the beach was a small cave hewn out of a detached fragment of stone, which

formed the chapel. Probably no congregation had ever been found to fill it. The descent was strewn with wild flowers and ferns, that grew in every crack and crevice where root could enter. Over the pebbly beach the sea for ever ebbed and flowed; ever sang its burden to the rocks, the caves, the seagulls, and the sky that covered all this desolate and lonely coast.

It was harder work to remount this Jacob's ladder. The steps were steep and slippery, and one often narrowly escaped a backward roll that would have proved neither pleasant not profitable. Here and there a stray sheep looked down upon us, as if wondering why we worked so hard in all this blazing sunshine. They skipped from point to point, sure-footed as the chamois, and stood on six inches of ground overlooking shuddering depths—but without a shudder. Why could not mortals do the same?

Once more at the top, we paused to realise and enjoy the scene: this gathering together of sea and rocks and sparkling air and expanse of blue sky, and seagulls soaring and wheeling with wild clang. Oh, the delight of these grand and silent places, wherever found; these mighty rocks, this restless ocean, these eloquent solitudes. It is heaven to be amongst them—as it was that afternoon. There is no greater pleasure on earth—none more pure and wholesome.

Here and there across the moors one caught sight of distant fields, and men and women at work, and hay that fell to the sickle or was being heaped on to

waggons. Then, again, all this would be lost, as our capricious pathway suddenly dipped half-way down the rocks, where we startled the seagulls, and sent them seawards with a wild remonstrance against this invasion of their territories. Whilst every now and then a pause was necessary, lest the next step should land us in air, over the steep side, to join the fragments on the shores, until such time as the sea claimed us for its own, gathered us to its mighty bosom, and chanted us its eternal cradle song for a requiem.

The afternoon was on the wane when we reached a quaint and curious village or hamlet, which seemed to have nestled itself in between the rocks and the sea, so that if a mighty wave were one day to come, it might all be swept into death and oblivion. A strange spot, with hardly a foothold upon the earth. A narrow thoroughfare, rough and undulating; a cluster of houses capriciously thrown about; small cottages inhabited by fishermen and others, with a tiny beach below them, where boats were moored. The place had a singular and picturesque, but somewhat poverty-stricken aspect, as if it had no part or lot in the good fortunes of this prosperous little island.

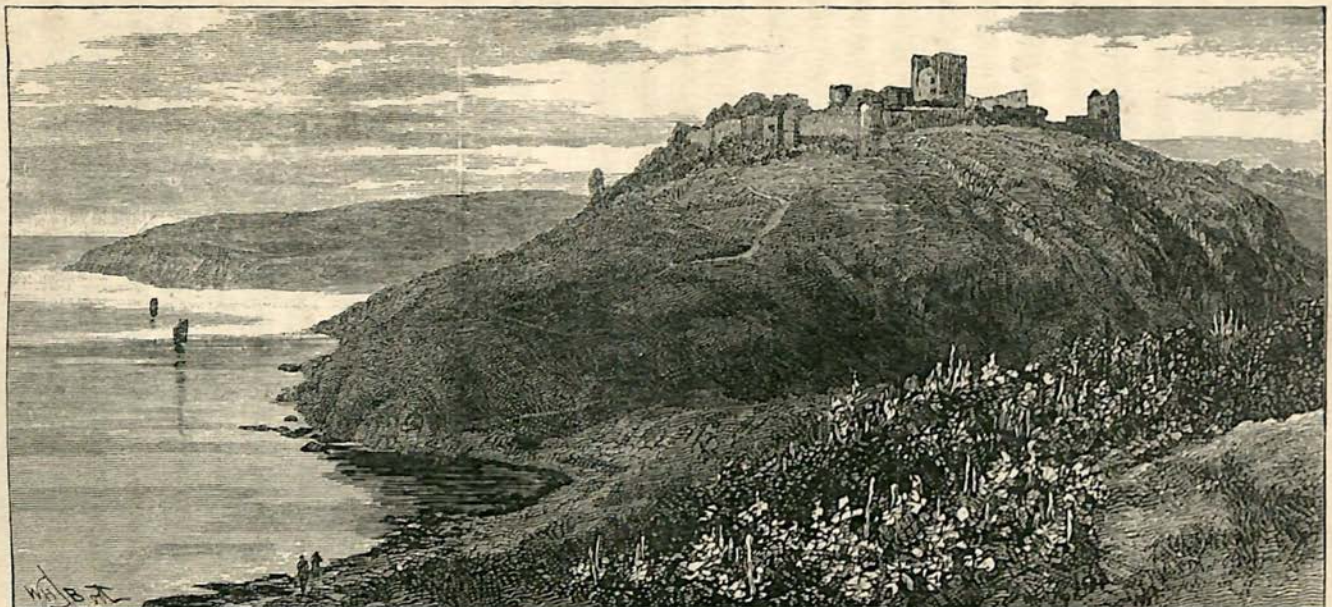
Near one of the small cottages the road divided, and we had to ask our way. The good woman came out, and with much politeness indicated the somewhat intricate path we had to follow. Five minutes later we stood face to face with another puzzle, in the shape of two roads. Hesitating, and turning, we saw

the woman still looking after us. For, seeing our difficulty, she had watched and waited, and now, with dumb motions, indicated that we must keep to the left.

Desolate and remote this village, which was called Vang, might be; primitive and poor its inhabitants; but barbarous or uncivilised they were not. Kindly and hospitable they are; and, as already remarked, these virtues do not spring from interested motives.

Not far off now, crowning the heights above us, were the ruins of Hammershuus, the end of our pilgrimage. A winding path led to them through a copse or thicket of brushwood and stunted trees, where ferns and wild flowers grew in abundance. Stiles had to be overcome, and here and there small dykes called out one's leaping powers. The steep cliffs of the earlier part of our walk had disappeared, and with them the extreme grandeur of the coast, but the ruins before us stood out boldly on the slopes. It was a tug to reach them; the final struggle; but at last we stood within the ruins, looking down from crumbling walls on all the change and decay of man's art and handiwork; looking upon the rocky shores, eternal in their might and majesty.

These mediæval ruins date back to the thirteenth century, and were then in the hands of the Church. So, also, at one time was the whole island. They are some of the most extensive ruins in Europe; and to antiquarians some of the most interesting. But the whole island possesses a store of antiquities of great



RUINS OF HAMMERSHUUS.

value; runic stones, and circular churches, and other evidences of its ancient history.

Change and decay have set their seal upon the ruins of Hammershuus. Many portions have entirely disappeared, and probably more would have done so but for occasional restorations. It was first built by Erlandsen, Archbishop of Lund, and in those unsettled times it frequently changed hands, now belonging to the Church, now to the State. Crowning those desolate and distant rocks, it must have been a grand and noble object; from its remoteness, a sort of wonder of the world. Fierce were the fights it witnessed, great the bloodshed, legion the prisoners that languished in its dungeons. Some of these dungeons have preserved substantial traces of their existence, as if they had been the most solidly built portions of the great structures.

In those days it may be that no other building was in sight beyond the dependencies of the great castle; and of these no traces remain. Even now the ruins stand out alone and desolate, with no modern tenement to disturb their romantic influence and impression. But on the other side; in the hollow beyond the wood and the wild heather, near the lighthouse of Hammeren; is an inn that, with its numerous buildings, forms quite a small colony. It owes its existence, and whatever prosperity it may enjoy, to the ruins; and in this way, as well as in other ways, the deeds we do live after us. From the castle heights this small cluster of houses looked

buried in a depression, sheltered from the north and east winds, which blow here with a mighty vengeance.

The inn appeared quiet and deserted, but on approach we found every room occupied by a crowd of noisy people; a very unexpected and disturbing influence. Excursionists, Danes or Swedes, who, staying in Bornholm for a season, had come over for the day in wagonettes, and now made the place resound with "the loud laughter that bespeaks the vacant mind."

Here we were to have met Jehu, but though hours had passed since we had seen him disappear in a cloud of dust, he had not yet turned up. This was rather bad on his part.

To pass away the time, we ordered dinner and inspected the premises. But the larder had been severely taxed, and we had to be content with modest fare. In comparison with this, we had feasted sumptuously at Hasle. The whole inn seemed in possession of the enemy; and we felt towards them as Church and State must have felt towards each other in the middle ages, when fighting for castle and crown. We asked if they could give us rooms in case Jehu failed altogether, and they produced a couple of dark closets which would have banished sleep from the most weary.

Opposite the inn a sloping hill hid the sea and broke the strength of the north wind. Here cattle grazed and led a quiet life. And here we found a traveller who, like ourselves, had come with surprise

upon this noisy crowd. He was a Frenchman, walking leisurely through the island, a more satisfactory way of seeing places when time and strength are in favour of it. He had spread his rug upon the green slopes, this Frenchman, and thrown himself down with a book. But there was no peace to be had even here. Every cow came up in turn to look at him, with great questioning eyes and horns, until they forced him to move on and leave them masters of the situation. The sea broke and plashed not many yards away, and in rough weather the wind carries the spray and foam into the very inn itself, and doors and windows are kept fast closed. Yet one would rather have encountered those rough blasts than this noisy assembly.

The shades of evening were beginning to fall when Jehu made his appearance. He looked conscious and guilty, and evidently had spent the afternoon in some well-known haunt, where possibly he had boon companions and a favourite brew. With the exception of a small town here and there on the sea-coast, the houses and settlements in Bornholm are few and far between, and the drivers are sure of a welcome from every door they pass. They bring news from the outer world; produce a little variety and excitement in lives that must be terribly monotonous. He was extremely anxious to remain the night in our present quarters; but without pushing on, our three days' task would hardly be accomplished. Therefore, after a short rest to the

horses—they must have rested most of the afternoon —we once more set off on our travels.

The road was gloomy and desolate, but a certain grandeur about it was made more impressive by the twilight, which here lingers long. On the extreme northern point of the island to our left the lighthouse of Hammerberg was already flashing out its warning. A small lake reposed between us and the rising hills: "well stocked with fish," said Jehu, who by extra civility was trying to make up for playing truant. "Would we like to drive round and inspect the lighthouse?" But we preferred to keep on our way, without further loss of time.

Turning southward, we came to Sandvig, pretty and picturesque, but little more than a fishing village. It was built on the sloping hills, and cottages stretched down almost to the very edge of the shore. There was something so primitive and interesting about it; so clean and quiet—as if here one need fear no inroads of noisy excursionists—that we felt half inclined to put up at Sandvig for the night. But, whatever might be our own impression, it was evidently no favourite spot of the driver's. Here was no strong brew or boon companion. We saw it as plainly as if he had said so. He whipped up his cattle, swept past the little houses and the quiet church, and had only one reply to any remark: "Very bad hotel." Perhaps it was true; certainly it must have been humble and unpretending. But so was the inn near the ruins of

Hammershuus, where he had shown himself regardless of consequences by suggesting a halt for the night.

And we almost wondered at our strength of mind in leaving Hammershuus, in spite of the crowd and the bad rooms. For there was a great charm about the place, a solemnity about the scenery difficult to describe. The disposition of the hills and their undulations; the stretches of green, quiet slopes; the remoteness of the inn from the world; the sea rolling up, breaking and surging, ebbing and flowing, within a few feet of us; all threw out their subtle influence. Above all, one felt impressed by those rocky slopes crowned by the ruins that stood out so clearly and sharply against the calm evening sky; ruins that carried one back to the middle ages and threw their glamour and romance over the spot, conjuring up pictures of bygone glory, when the Church had so much power in her own hands, and did not always use it with discretion.

It had been difficult to tear oneself away from those ruins within an hour or two of seeing them for the first time. To turn one's back upon them was to do so for ever. Life is short, and there is much to be done, and it was improbable that we should ever see Bornholm again. We longed to see the ruins in the glow of early morning; when the sun, rising out there across the sea, in the East, threw all its beauty upon the water and gilded the crumbling walls with its magic touch, bringing back life to the dead.

Perhaps, too, all the impression of our afternoon's walk was upon us, and it does not do to multiply impressions too quickly. So, many reasons had conspired to keep us that night at the little inn under the shadow of Hammershuus; not least of all, perhaps, the fact that the walk, with its winding paths and Jacob's ladders, had been terribly tiring, and rest had seemed for the present the most desirable thing on earth.

Nevertheless we went our way. In spite of the Frenchman who found no resting-place on the slopes for the cows, and who had begged us to keep him company in the solitary inn. But we pointed out to him that, though solitary, it was by no means deserted, and though surrounded by desolation without, it was noisy enough within. Our time, too, was limited. So we had gone our way in spite of Jehu, who evidently left behind him attractions he was loth to part with. But we had no pity for him. We left the ruins clearly outlined against the sky, gave them a last, long, lingering gaze, listened to their solemn message, and saw them no more.

We had our reward. The drive to Allinge, our night's resting-place, was the most wild and weird bit of scenery we encountered during the whole three days. In broad daylight it would have lost nearly all its charm and effect. Gloomy, grand and desolate, remote from the world and all evidences of life, it made an impression upon us which yet remains. In daylight, also, all the beauty and depth and desola-

tion of the little lake would have been absent. Even Sandvig itself might have looked less picturesque and alluring. But in situation it will always be far preferable to Allinge.

On we went, through an undulating country, the sea close to us on the left, and always visible. Before long the lights of Allinge shone out in the gathering gloom, and we clattered through the long street of the little town. It did not look half so picturesque as Sandvig, nor half so quiet, whilst there was more pretence about it. Men lounged and stared lazily—it was their hour of repose. Work was over for the day for some of them, and had not commenced for those who went out upon the deep and spent their nights toiling. From the open windows of one small house came sounds of music and song, and a small crowd of people, quite fashionable in evening dress, moved about the lighted rooms. A golden-haired youth—the jeunesse dorée of Allinge—was bending sentimentally over a syren; equally young and fair, from whom proceeded the sweet sounds. Others were elegantly turning over photographs.

All this was caught at a glance as we passed. It was like a vivid tableau vivant, thrown out in relief by the light within contrasted with the shadows without—though it was not yet dark. The only wonder was that there should be so much display; windows open, uncurtained, exposed to the gaze of the loungers, who hung about and peered curiously. Perhaps it is the custom of this small place; and

habit is second nature. The familiar ceases to be strange.

Allinge possesses some eight hundred inhabitants. It consists very much of one long street, built almost on the water's edge. Opposite the very house just described was the small harbour: a harbour within a harbour, as it were; so that little vessels coming in performed a zigzag. It was strongly constructed, with a small lighthouse, and a few fishing-boats lay in its shelter. Just beyond the harbour was the inn, to which Jehu conducted us in state. We passed under a gateway into a great courtyard; a dog barked a welcome; lights gleamed in the windows; there was a small stir and commotion, and a fat landlady attended by a bustling handmaiden came out upon the steps.

No doubt about our remaining here for the night. Rooms were quickly found, small but satisfactory. They looked on to the sea, and we could watch the fishing-boats putting out. The whole place was primitive, but quiet.

Once settled at the inn, we sauntered out again to reconnoitre. Very little repaid us for our pains. There was an ordinary and commonplace look about the place. The very air seemed hot and stifling; unwholesome and confined. Built on the island slopes, the free winds of heaven had not sufficient play here. A wind blowing off the sea from the west was the only wind to which they seemed exposed. It was relaxing and depressing. The very

men lounging about looked limp and lazy; the few women were loud and untidy. No doubt the more respectable and the quieter had their homes and occupations to attend to, and were invisible, unheard. These women, wives and sweethearts of the fishermen, were looking on at the boats, wrangling and laughing amongst each other, taking life as they found it, and letting the world roll on as it would.

The shades of night were gathering. Out on the water one saw nothing but a dark expanse domed by a star-spangled sky. The small lighthouse had set up its beacon, which threw a track of light upon the water beneath. A few fishing-boats were preparing their nets and getting ready to put out to sea. Sounds of music still came from those open windows; forms flitted about the lighted rooms; everyone, indoors or out, was enjoying himself in his own way. Up the slopes, lights gleamed from small houses. There were narrow turnings one hardly cared to enter. Not that they seemed formidable or numerous, or even burglarious, but dirty and suffocating; no ventilation within doors, closeness without. The people, men and women, looked at us and passed their remarks. There was a crowded, crushed feeling about the little town, a want of air and space. Any longer sojourn than one night would hardly have been tolerable.

We went back to the hotel. Our rooms opened on to the general sitting-room, where travellers took their meals, and where we had to deposit our boots.

How those manage who, on arriving, find a roomful, it was hard to imagine. It cannot be a comfortable sensation to put down your boots in the face of a dozen people at supper. Besides, a man without his boots feels taken at a disadvantage. Yet this once happened to us at Allerheiligen in the Black Forest.

We had arrived late at night and gone straight to our room. Presently we opened the door, expecting vacancy and a passage. But behold a large hall, once the refectory of the monks, and to-night the refectory of lay men and women all earnestly engaged in supper. There seemed to be a thousand present, and probably there were at least forty. In a moment eighty eyes were focussed in one direction. We were probably taken for a ghost, for these were ghostly quarters, and we were in ghostly costume. The sensation was horrible. Some of the ladies screamed, and perhaps some of them fainted; whilst we beat a retreat, and consigned the whole company to the regions of the departed monks.

At Allinge we found no such disaster. The sitting-room was empty and quiet. There might be ghosts lurking about, but they were invisible. We do not dread the spirits of another world half so much as the grosser substances of this. Very soon the whole place was in repose. We watched for a time the lights of the fishing craft upon the calm clear waters of the Baltic. Now and then a far-off voice or a song came rolling quietly over the tranquil surface. Then we, too, turned in, and soon all was

lost in oblivion. At Allerheiligen our dreams had been haunted by a myriad eyes, but here we slept the dreamless sleep of the just: until early, too early, the next morning the chambermaid woke us to another day, and we found the sun already high and brilliant in the heavens.

CHAPTER XV.

AN EARTHLY PARADISE.

IN the early freshness Allinge looked less objectionable than it had seemed last night. Darkness and shadows had disappeared. In broad sunlight, even the narrow thoroughfares lost their close, uncanny feeling. The sea stretched out like a sapphire far as the eye could reach, sleeping, flashing in the sunshine. Last night we had had a star-gemmed sky, this morning we had a star-gemmed sea. This would have reconciled us to a far worse spot than Allinge; would have purified—we had almost said sanctified—a far more objectionable settlement. Away out on the surface of the water was the small island of Christiansö, a mere fortification, looking white and beautiful, calm and hazy, like a cloud resting upon a painted ocean.

All this we saw whilst breakfast was preparing at the hands of the bustling maiden, who helped one to the sweets of life in the form of delicious honey,

and stimulated one's nervous system with coffee of finest brew. Even Allinge had its good points in these small luxuries and refinements, which play no inconsiderable part in making life bearable.

Nevertheless, we were not sorry to turn our backs upon the little place. Man is not always as grateful as he might be. Small mercies seldom stir up great emotions, though they make up largely the sum and substance of existence. Very often, if we only knew it, we turn our backs in this calm, deliberate manner upon what would have proved life's turning-point and happiness, the flowing of fortune's tide. The fat old landlady had received us on her steps, and on her steps dismissed us. Between whiles she had been invisible, and on these occasions appeared and disappeared, erect and motionless, as if wound up for the ordeal.

We passed upwards out of the town, and, for a time lost the sea; our road lay inland. We were approaching the most beautiful and luxuriant part of the island; a small paradise of fertility, with groves of waving trees and fields of golden corn. It seemed as if one had only to tell things to grow and they did so. The intense heat of the sun was tempered by a refreshing breeze. The blue sky overhead, across which a few fleecy clouds now and then hurried, filled one with delight. Had the thermometer been up to 212° one would scarcely have quarrelled with it in a summer chiefly remarkable for its low temperature.

We passed through all this happy, smiling country, occasionally coming to a farm-house with great barns and buildings that spoke of a prosperity which here seems uninterrupted. The hay was all cut in the fields, and some of it was carried, and some was being made: the makers, happy, laughing, singing in lightness of heart. Here, it seemed, we had come upon fields Elysian, where care and sorrow entered not, and people rejoiced in eternal youth and beauty; a land flowing with milk and honey, corn and wine—red, sparkling wine of which one might take deep, deep draughts; refreshing, exhilarating; never sense or soul stealing.

We presently came upon one of the circular churches for which Bornholm is famous, which carry us back nearly a thousand years in the world's history, to the days when Christianity was first known in the island. These quaint churches do more to give a distinctive character to the island than almost anything else. On this flat ground they are seen for a considerable distance; landmarks of singular aspect. In early days they served as fortified towers, when religion was another name for war and persecution, and long and jealous conflicts were going on for the mastery between Church and State. Tall, circular towers are they to-day, with whitewashed walls glistening in the sun, standing out in contrast with the black, wooden, pointed roofs above them.

The church was surrounded by a quiet grave-

yard, with small wooden crosses, where the dead rest under green mounds, often flower-strewn: rest after life's calm and even tenour, as it seems to run in Bornholm. It appears to be nothing but a long, quiet, pastoral symphony. Arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses; simple rustics playing Corydon to a

CIRCULAR CHURCH.

simpler Phyllis. I dare say we exaggerated it all, but such was the effect upon us of all this peace and sunshine, these waving fields of corn, this clover-scented air mixing with the sweet scent of the new-mown hay.

In the church there had recently been a wedding. All down the little aisle bunches of heather and

flowers were propped in the old-fashioned pews, just as the holly used to be propped in our own churches at Christmas—and may still be found here and there in districts where time has stood still, and people are yet simple and refreshing. Here, to-day, the church was loaded with flowers and heather, and decorated with a green arch under which the happy pair must have passed out upon a world henceforth to be fairer than ever to them. The flowers, dead and drooping, looked sad, emblems as they were of mortality.

"When I remember all
The friends so linked together,
I've seen around me fall
Like leaves in wintry weather;
I feel like one who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed."

The words came unbidden; they had no business to come at all. There ought to be nothing here suggestive of sadness, and probably farthest from sadness were this happy Phyllis and Corydon. The altar-rails were also loaded with decorations, and the rude chandelier suspended from the ceiling. It all relieved the heaviness of the interior, which, though quaint and singular, was not beautiful.

The old sexton or clerk, who kept the keys, was anxious to show us the belfry and the bells, of which he seemed as proud as if they had been a

regalia. He begged us to try the tones, and there went ringing out upon the still air a startling peal. The Vicarage was hard by, and if the good parson was at home, he would know well what it meant. Not an alarm of fire; or of an enemy approaching by sea to take captive the flourishing island; not a passing bell to tell of a soul winging its flight to eternal regions; but merely his old clerk—he must have been eighty at least—showing off his treasures in pride of heart. There appeared no one else to terrify. The broad fields around were deserted. Far off, through the opened shutters, one caught sight of the shimmering sapphire sea. Below, at the little gate of the church, Jehu was stretched lazily upon his box, indifferent to bells and circular churches and life in general. There was neither romance nor simplicity about him. But then he came from Rönne, the capital of Bornholm: and Rönne was the least interesting spot in all the island.

We left it all behind us. The church with its dead emblems of happiness; the bells, on which we had rung a peal for very joy; the Vicarage, with the Vicar at a window, staring at us with a kindly smile, and making us a polite bow as we departed, wishing us, we felt quite sure, God-speed in his heart; the old custodian who saw us off the premises, like a faithful warden; the groves of trees that bent to the breeze, perhaps whispered of the happy ceremony they had lately witnessed, and cast a grateful shade from the burning glare of the sun, not yet up to its

meridian. We left all this behind us and continued our way.

We were now making for Dyndalen, which is considered the prettiest part of the island. Presently, a gentle descent towards the sea-coast, amidst wooded and luxuriant slopes, and we had reached our morning's halting-place. A goodly-sized inn, shut out from the high road, surrounded by gardens and orchards, and a wooded valley given up to everything wild and beautiful in forest life. Here we bade farewell to the solitude and repose of our morning drive. This spot was evidently the island's centre of attraction. A long table in the dining-room —nay, in several rooms—covered with cloths that had once been white, but were now occupied with an army of flies, living and dead, testified to the number of visitors staying here, or expected to arrive. From somewhere there came a sound of ninepins—a vulgar discord that had no place in the harmony of this refined little island. Voices raised in laughter smote the air; girls were singing; others were playing croquet.

We quickly left it all. Left the horses to their repose, Jehu to don a working blouse, and stable and groom his cattle and take his pleasure: and went down to the sea, through lovely, laughing slopes and wooded undulations, all gilded and glowing with sunshine, all reposing under the bluest of skies.

Oh, the cherry trees that gladdened us, and tanta-

lised us, and delayed us on our way! Such immense trees were never seen, or such an abundance of fruit; trees literally groaning with the weight of their delicious burdens. But nearly all the fruit was out of reach. We had to look and long. There was no ladder at hand; no monkeys to pelt us with cherries instead of cocoanuts; no possibility of climbing. We invented all sorts of manœuvres; lassoes that were just too short; leaps that touched fruit-laden branches, only to spring back minus a leaf, plus a disappointment. It was of no use. We met two or three people coming up as we were going down. They had conscious looks and black lips, and evidently had found out a secret way of reaching the forbidden fruit. Why not we also?

We passed on to the sea and another Jacob's ladder: a rough, picturesque descent into a small, rocky, romantic cove. By jumping from one rock to another we reached an old man and a boat: the Old Man of the Sea, perhaps. But the tables were turned. He did not take us prisoners—we detained him; not longer than he bargained for, but longer than others bargained for, as we presently discovered.

He pushed away into the open water. Calm as it was, scarcely a ripple upon its dark blue flashing surface, yet it broke boisterously amongst the rocks; beat and foamed and threw its white spray around. On land, looking out from a distance, one would have said so much surf was impossible.

The rocks were beautiful and broken; high, rugged and wild. There were small recesses that might almost have become harbours, given over to seagulls; rocks honeycombed with the influence of time and water and weather; caves and natural

NEAR DYNDALEN

arches, where we passed for a moment, from the heat and glare of the sun, the sparkling water, into a chilling gloom,

We paddled in and out of these rocky recesses, rejoicing in their wild freedom and solitude; revelling in the plash and dash of the waves, mingled with the

cry and clang of the seagulls. Then the old boatman turned, and where cliffs gave place to a shelving beach, above which a wooded valley ran up into the land, he put us on shore. It was not the easiest task in the world, while the water broke over the rocks like a small tempest.

He went off again into smooth places, and rested on his oars. We went up the Dyndalen. A beautiful wood with trees, young and old, all shadow and sunshine, leaves glinting and rustling; paths moss grown, strewn with ferns and wild flowers. The silence was perfect. Not a bird chirped; even the plash of the sea could not be heard—lost, perhaps, in the music of the leaves: a forest sound that never breaks the forest silence, but makes it seem only more palpable. Not a human being was visible; no trace of well-trodden paths to mark man's presence; nothing but soft moss, spread like a rich carpet under one's feet. Here and there a squirrel ran up a tree, and looked down impudently at us from an overhanging bough, with black, sparkling eyes and curled-up tail: dark-brown little creatures, beautiful and graceful, but very wild. They would not come at our bidding, who had not Thoreau's gift to charm them.

The skipper of our steamer had said there were spots in Bornholm in which one could linger for days. It was quite true. We could have lingered days here, perhaps weeks. These sylvan solitudes were inexpressibly charming, and might be varied by the

solitude of sea and rocks and caves, almost more charming still. Here Nature in all her forms and phases was at her best.

But to linger was not for those who counted time by moments, not by days or even hours. We stayed our longest in these sunny glades, these whispering trees, through which the sun glinted and made pictures upon the mossy paths. Then we went down to the beach, half doubting. Had the old boatman's patience been tried too far? Would he have departed, and left us to find our way back through brake and briar?

No; the good old weatherbeaten figure was still resting on his oars, calm as Patience smiling at Grief. He evidently felt there was nothing else for it; but with the occasion roused up to energy, and steered in amongst the rocks with no little trouble. The sea was even more plashing and boisterous than it had been an hour ago, but impossible feats in jumping from rock to rock, slippery and sliding as small icebergs, led us to the boat. Then he pushed out again, and in the broad, smooth sea, in full view of the rocky coast, returned to our first starting-point.

At the bottom of Jacob's ladder, gesticulating and impatient, a noisy group waited. How long they had been "standing in dangerous paths" was uncertain. We selfishly consoled ourselves with the thought that it had not been our lot to wait, to whom time was precious and moments were golden.

On landing and giving place, we felt—for we did not look—that the group glared upon us, who yet were not guilty of intent. How could we tell that others were waiting? or that there was only one boat for all requirements? As for the old boatman, a substantial fee made him our champion for ever. So we departed with a light heart and a free conscience.

We set out once more in the early afternoon. The beauty of the day was uninterrupted. The character of the scenery did not change. The island is flat about here, except immediately on the seacoast, where—as at Dyndalen—we have seen that it falls away in hills and valleys, laughing, fertile and wooded, terminating in wild and rugged rocks. Inland, the aspect is the exact opposite to all this. It is a pastoral scene of peace and plenty. A succession of fields, cultivated and productive. Waving corn is conspicuous; flowering clover, and hay, drying upon the meadows, delight the senses. Straight, white roads intersect the fields; roads well made and well kept, as everything is in this flourishing island. Bornholm is a wonderfully green oasis in the midst of a desert of water. Yet its attractions are so simple and unpretending that one must be keenly sensitive to the beauties of Nature to appreciate its influence. There will be found no excitement to awaken violent emotions in a single acre of the whole island. Its charms are of quite a different description.

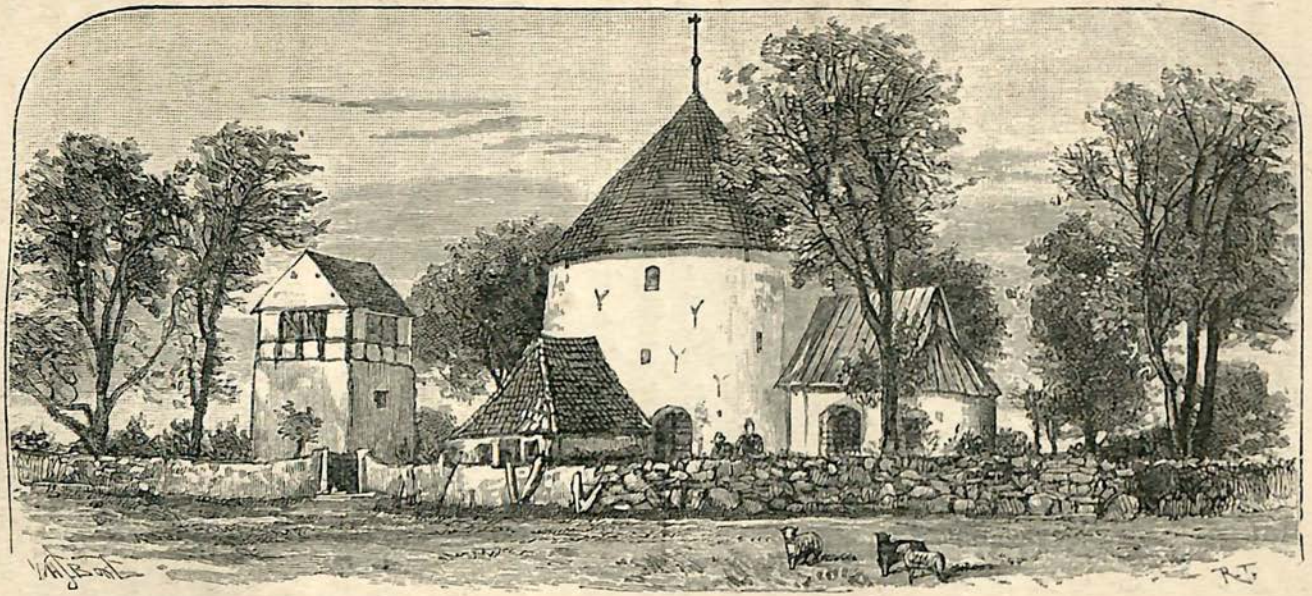
On our way this afternoon, we passed the largest of the circular churches in Bornholm, forming quite a small settlement. The bell tower was near, which, of course, we mounted. But the sexton and keeper of these treasures, whether old or young we could not tell, was absent. He was away in the fields, haymaking, and had been good enough to leave all doors open for the benefit of strayers and strangers. In his absence, the bells had rest. We thought it wiser not to ring a peal, startling the air, and bringing up the good man to see what had gone wrong or who was trespassing.

The view from the tower repaid one for the trouble in mounting; disclosed a wide surface of laughing fields, intersected by long white roads; here and there a farm-house with dependencies, larger and more important than itself; a far off sapphire sea shimmering in the sunshine, as broad and full and warm at three o'clock in the afternoon as it had been at ten in the morning. In the midst of the sea, the small island and refuge of Christiansö looked like a cloud hardly bigger than a man's hand rising out of the water. Groves and plantations here and there varied the flat surface of Bornholm, and the monotony of the corn-fields: waving avenues delicious for the eye to rest upon, still more grateful and delicious to pass into from the sun's glare and heat.

Just below was the Vicarage, separated from the little graveyard by a garden stocked with roses.

It was difficult to restrain the wish to enter and keep one's hands from picking and stealing. Probably, no one would less have objected than the good Vicar. But for want of courage, or for want of a little knowledge, we miss many good things in life. A tender conscience, and to be righteous over much, inevitably debar one from many things in this world that would otherwise be lawful. The Vicarage, like the church, was white, and looked cool and inviting. Creepers hung about the windows, flowers within spoke of a ministering spirit, sensible of the influence of refinement. The house was quite imposing, and seemed almost larger than the church, if not so lofty.

As usual, in the graveyard were more small wooden crosses than marble monuments, and the dead seemed to sleep more calmly under the green mounds than under cold and formal stones. Daisies grew above them, and flowers bloomed. There was a newly-made grave, evidently just prepared to receive one whose simple annals were closed. In such quiet it hardly seemed that anyone could die, hardly that there was anyone to die. At the end of the graveyard a small building, that looked like a mortuary chapel, proved to be the good Vicar's coach-house. The doors were open, and the gig was reposing shafts downwards. With this no doubt, he perambulated the island, and paid pastoral and social visits. The horse was absent, probably in some neighbouring field, growing fat and lazy



CIRCULAR CHURCH.

with the abundance of good things that fell to his lot in this cornucopia state of existence, this modern Canaan.

How quiet and still it all was. What a strangely calm, uneventful life to lead in the eyes of those whose lines are cast amidst the busy haunts of men. How wide the one's thoughts, feelings and emotions from the other's; what opposite stakes are being played for, what different aspirations, ambitions. If the good Vicar here was not an emblem of worth and virtue, where could they be found? It is very well to say that human nature is the same all the world over. Born so it may be, but the temptations of the world are reduced to their lowest in these far-away corners of the earth, where the seasons run their quiet course, and seed time and harvest are the great events of life's calendar.

Leaving the church almost reluctantly, we presently came to perhaps the most curious spot in all the island. A strange grove, dating back to prehistoric times. We had to turn out of our way for it, for it does not lie in the direct route. Outside the little gate admitting to the charmed circle, a small party had encamped upon the grass. Their horse was grazing, their cart was at rest, they had boiled a kettle with sticks, and were quietly enjoying themselves. Not a sound came from them to disturb the sacred silence of the grove. The very nod with which they greeted us in country fashion was given in absolute silence. They might have

been dumb as the stones on which we presently gazed.

We passed through the little gate into the shelter and shadow of the pine trees. Dark and melancholy was the effect. We were in a new world, or rather an old one, gazing on ancient remains. Runic stones standing upright, with a few records and inscriptions;

RUNIC STONE.

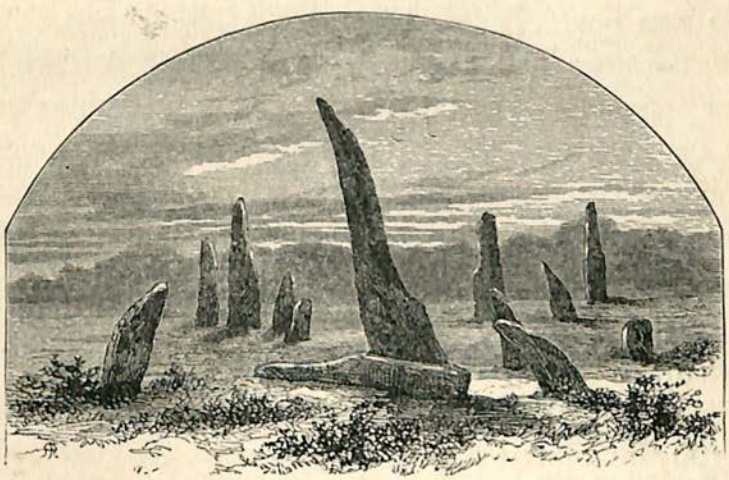
and mounds, where no doubt the dead lay in the rest and repose of untold centuries. The far-off dead, barbarous and heathen, who worshipped here according to their lights.

Paths ran round in circles, intersected by shorter paths and devices, with the puzzling turnings of a maze whose meaning was lost to mankind. Small

mounds rose here and there with fortifications. Everywhere visible through the trees were the upright runic stones. Melancholy pines cast long shadows. Sunbeams entering this mysterious grove almost seemed to lose their brightness and warmth. A strange atmosphere, solemn and weird, penetrated the place and cast its spell upon mind and spirit. One seemed chain-bound by its influence, as if the ghosts of those who had walked and worshipped in these groves yet hovered about them. The very rustling of the pine trees above our heads seemed charged with voices of an unknown tongue. The very shadows, deeply marked between the intervening sun spaces, might have been shades of the departed, that would presently lift and flit to and fro, and fill the groves with the mystery of the supernatural. It seemed impossible to leave the spot. Gloomy and mysterious and depressing, it yet had a strange power to charm; which stole upon the senses like the subtle fumes of a deadly nightshade. It was not a healthy influence, but difficult to resist.

Here in these groves, in those unknown ages, overshadowed by trees such as these, the heathen rites of a mysterious religion were celebrated to the invisible and the imaginary. Rude sacrifices, immolations at the altar of superstition, were offered up in a vain propitiation. We had never before found a spot where all this was so wonderfully realised, and felt doubtful whether such another existed.

The remains of Stonehenge, those great ruins on Salisbury Plain, cleaving the sky with sharp outlines in that desolate moor, where nothing else seems to stand between them and the eternity of space, appeared powerless to impress the mind in comparison with the groves and stones and mounds and circles of Louiselund. The one is a ruin, requiring a key to its interpretation: the other might have



RUNIC STONES.

been in full possession of rites and ceremonials only an hour ago. It might still be warm with the blood of sacrifice, still echoing with the cry of a victim.

The whole was surrounded by a thick, high hedge, which still more separated the grove from the outer world. Beyond that hedge, fields of waving corn stretched far away, bathed in sunshine. They seemed out of place, unneeded. We were

under the spell of Louiselund. Life ought to be visionary and spiritual. The grosser wants of the body had no place here. Existence was supported without food: time was not marked by moments and hours.

We sat and absorbed the influence in spite of ourselves. Sat upon a sacred mound and dreamed dreams, and imagined the air full of spiritual influences about to claim us for their own. Past life was over, remembrance was dying out, the world as we had known it was fading. A torpor was creeping over the senses; nerves vibrated like a harp of a thousand strings struck by unseen hands. We were powerless to move. Shadows lengthened, the sun went downwards, and still we moved not. How long we should have remained I know not, but presently Jehu, anxious or impatient, came quietly through and searched us out. The spell was broken. He brought us back to earthly and present things with the shock of one who is suddenly awakened. But it was a very necessary awakening. We would not have fallen under the spell of those unseen influences, whatever they might be—for some uncanny and mysterious power seems to claim for its own those who have the temerity to wander within its sacred groves. Like the labours of Sisyphus, you might—not roll a stone, but wander round and round those magic circles, chained to their orbit with sure mesmeric tyranny.

We passed from the old world of superstition and heathenism into the healthier light and influence of the new. The group upon the grassy slopes were exactly as we had first found them. They had ended their Arcadian feast, but had not stirred. Probably the eloquence and good-fellowship of Jehu had enchained them: just as a more subtle influence had kept us spellbound within the groves of Louiselund. But if, as Caliban says, they had "filled the isle with noises and sweet airs that gave delight and hurt not," they must have been very subdued, for we had heard no sound. Either this, or in those charmed groves our spirits had actually taken flight into the regions of the unseen.

We went our way. The picnic group gave us another silent nod at parting: no word, no smile, no movement of a muscle. They could not be automatons, for these neither eat nor drink, and there on the grass was a small charred ring, remains of the fire that had burnt the sticks that had boiled the kettle that had made the tea that automatons could not have taken. With the departure of Jehu's fascinations, they probably would figuratively fold their tent and seek fresh pastures.

We were bound for Svanike, a small place on the coast, and, for Bornholm, an important one. We reached it about an hour after leaving Louiselund, passing through the same placid scenery, which chanted us one long symphony as we went. A Pastoral addressed to the bounties of Earth, a

Hymn of Praise to the beauties of Nature. Everywhere we saw these waving fields ripening to harvest. At one large farm-house, an immense waggon was turning in, literally groaning under its weight of hay. Men worked in the yard, housing another load in the great barns, sending it with huge pitchforks into the open mouth of a great loft that refused to be satisfied.

We passed on, getting nearer to the sea, which shone in front of us like a flashing sapphire. One is never tired of the comparison. How have too much sunshine and blue skies and seas, and fresh breezes, "God's glorious oxygen," gladdening the smiling earth, and rustling and glistening amongst the forest branches, and filling one with happiness and exhilaration? How have too much of influences that have restored life to the dying, convinced and conquered many a doubting spirit, and brought it back to the faith of its youth? We cannot have too much of them even in visions; would they were ever before us as realities.

A descent towards the sea-coast; a small town ahead of us, which for the moment looked a collection of roofs and nothing more; a nearer approach disclosing a quaint little place, with streets and shops that seemed quite to eclipse the capital; a quiet air of prosperity; gardens full of roses; a small church upon a hill, and a flower-laden graveyard; an hotel partly covered with ivy, well organised, and owned by the most charming of landladies, with manners

and appearance too refined for the task of receiving and satisfying all sorts and conditions of travellers; a harbour and pier before the windows, and the glorious sea stretching beyond.

Such was Svanike: and we felt that for that evening our lines had again fallen in pleasant places.

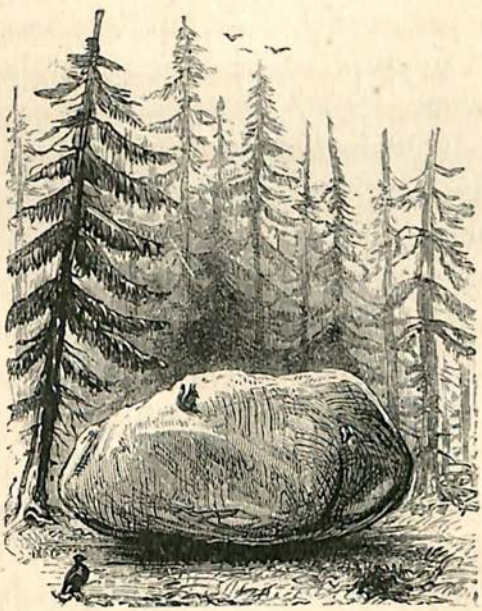
CHAPTER XVI.

PARADISE CONTINUED.

SVANIKE seemed the most spirited place we had yet seen in Bornholm. This by comparison, for no place in the little island is really noisy or enterprising. Svanike is built almost upon the sea. Water, deep enough to float a large vessel, came up almost to the very doors of the inn. Only a few yards off was the harbour; one harbour within another, built in fashion peculiar to itself; the outer harbour stretching in crescent form, like arms meeting in friendly embrace. There was only just room for a vessel to pass through the opening. Beyond, the deep sea stretched far as sight could reach; and for ever resting upon it, that white cloud, the little island of Christiansö: another harbour of refuge, similar to Svanike, but smaller and of less reputation.

That evening was important for the little place, which was seen under excited circumstances. An

excursion boat was coming in from Copenhagen, bringing a small army of visitors for a twenty-four hours' sojourn. This was not welcome news. Excursionists were evidently not to be avoided, even in remote ends of the earth. The hotel was in a fermented condition. Our landlady was encumbered



A ROCKING STONE.

with applications for rooms, and two unexpected arrivals caused her cup of perplexity to overflow. But possession is nine points of the law. "J'y suis, j'y reste," said Dumas, when they tried to turn him out of his dark closet. Strong measures, however, were hardly necessary in this instance. Our obliging hostess had no intention of consigning us,

who were first on the scene, to other quarters. The excursionists were not even in sight.

There were runic remains in the neighbourhood, and we went in search of them.

The little town was hilly, but the streets were straight as far as the regularity of the houses was concerned. Away from the shore everything was quiet. We passed the churchyard, and went into the church. It was plain and unadorned, cold and cheerless, as are most of the churches in these Northern latitudes. Whitewashed walls, high-backed pews and narrow seats, windows guiltless of colour distinguish them. The sun streams in, but it is always white and glaring. There is no dim religious light in their services; no appealing to the imagination; very seldom anything attempted even in the way of oratory. Cold are the voices, often hard and metallic. The soft whispers which thrill the emotions, and the sympathetic tones that touch the heart are rarely heard. They are banished as unhealthy influences which do not carry with them the essence of Divine life. It is as though these colder climes threw a chilling mantle over the hearts of men, repressing outward emotion. Calm and dispassionate are they, for the most part.

Everything has its good side; and perhaps the good here is that these Northern races are not carried away by enthusiasm. They are slow, but thorough. In their religion they have no revivals; no mission weeks to raise them to a fervour which too often

passes away with the occasion, leaving the last state worse than the first. What they profess to be they are, consistently and constantly; but they do not make great professions.

The graveyard at Svanike was loaded with flowers. You might almost have thought it decorated for a special occasion, such as the bridal of a favourite village maiden. It was not so. The people of Svanike, Northern race though they might be, had evidently warm hearts and retentive memories. To them the graves of their dead were holy. The hushed voice was yet heard, the invisible hand still beckoned.

At a newly-made grave where the sod was green and tender, two young girls in black were stooping, working with trowels and planting flowers. There was a sad look in the eyes, and tears overflowed. They were very quiet, and watching those pale, patient faces and quivering lips, one might say that here, at any rate, was no want of sympathy or deep emotion, but an evidence of the profound waters of affection that run silently. Both were pretty, lady-like and refined, dressed as ladies might dress, with close bonnets and well-fitting gowns well put on; evidently sisters, and so much of a size, height and age, they might have been twins.

The graveyard was itself an evidence of the prosperity of Svanike and its pretensions. Tombstones and monuments abounded. Hitherto, in the small churchyards, modest wooden crosses had chiefly marked where the dead rested, green mounds and

daisies, and the blue sky above. Here was the town element and influence. It did not look half so calm and restful. But there was more to occupy the attention, and many of the epitaphs were curious. An abundance of flowers took from the place its gloom, and one might have said almost cheerfully: "Here I, too, would rest after life's fitful fever."

We left one graveyard only to pass to another. Through a long, straggling street, uphill, and far less interesting than the scene we had just been contemplating, we came to a tract of barren country, ending in a stretch of flat coast, where the sea broke and surged over a sandy beach. Desolate, stony-looking ground, where the grass was brown and burnt by the sun. A little further was the field of runic stones we were in search of.

Here, again, we were in the presence of a long past, a prehistoric age. At once we stepped into an ancient world. A great plain, on which were many runic monuments, some still upright, some fallen from their high estate, like heathen Bethels come to grief—a great, desolate graveyard. If these stones marked the resting-places of the dead, here they had lain for untold ages, ever in sight of that mighty sea with its sad burden of sound. But interesting as was this spot, so full of antiquities and the thoughts they conjured, it had none of the charm of Louiselund. Here were no mystic groves and circles, no trees to cast mysterious shadows. Every thing was open to the sky, the free light of the sun, the

pure winds of heaven, the wide expanse of water, and all the unromantic land around.

We stayed long, making seats of the fallen stones; huge and coffin-shaped some of them, ripe and ready for a museum. Stayed and listened to the sea surging its everlasting song; tried to realise what this spot had been in the lost ages; what times and cycles and centuries had passed since rude hands had raised these monuments; what the world had then been, and what it would be when another such period had elapsed, and man had outstripped all present bounds of wisdom and knowledge.

We left the runic field, with its melancholy influence, and went back to the town. The quay was in a state of siege and excitement. Everyone had come down to see the steamer, now approaching. It was evidently crowded, and one trembled for the peace of Svanike. But it turned out that the greater number on board were going on with the boat to other fields and pastures. Svanike was favoured with only a small portion. The landlady found she had rooms and to spare. The boat was going round to Rönne and other places, and to-morrow would return for those left here to-night.

A goodly-sized steamer, looking, in this small harbour, like a giant in the hands of a pigmy. As long as she remained, she was subjected to a close inspection from the natives, glad of any small event to vary the monotony of life. After an hour's stay the bell rang, gangways were withdrawn, and

she departed, almost as crowded as when she came in. At the end of the little pier we watched her ploughing up the water, and leaving a restless track behind. Right and left might be traced a long line of coast; rocks gradually rising till they became high cliffs. In the immediate neighbourhood the coast was flat and slippery, and brown rocks, with seaweed and great pools of water, looked suspicious territory.

We crossed them with slidings and hairbreadth escapes, occasionally turning inland amongst fishermen's cottages, where the old wives stood at the doors knitting their everlasting stockings. Very barren the ground looked on these sea slopes, though there was a struggle going on for some sort of cultivation. Poor and dilapidated were the cottages and the old wives; ragged and very happy the young bare-legged children, that ran wild—for whom the everlasting stockings were evidently not destined. Quite a colony apart from the town seemed these cottages without the boundaries. They had no part or lot in the prosperity of the little place. The steamer that had come and gone, the daily annals of the town, brought no change or excitement to their lives. They had only to do with their own colony; their small mutual interests, narrow as their little circle; wide as the tragedies that too often await those who go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters. Hopes and thoughts lay in husbands, sons, and brothers; in the fishing-nets they helped to

make or mend, whilst the stocking rested awhile on the shelf; in the fishing-boats, which put off day by day, or night by night, wind and weather permitting. Toilers of the deep, workers of the sea.

We were driven back by the terrible smells that came across these slopes and cuttings and flat rocks. No doubt they are wholesome, or the neighbourhoods would be desolated, and man cease to be; vultures would haunt them for a time and then fly to other regions. But wholesome or not, they were too much for us, and sent us back to Svanike.

Even there the air was not perfumed with lavender, yet the place seemed clean and well arranged, and the people were civilised. There was quite a business feeling about the place, as if its inhabitants went in for activity and reforms. Gardens bloomed about the little houses, trees overshadowed them. It was quite the most advanced place in Bornholm. In the middle of the town, you were within sight and sound and reach of the pier and harbour, centres of attraction; but at Rönne you had quite a long walk through those primitive, deadly-lively streets before reaching the shipping.

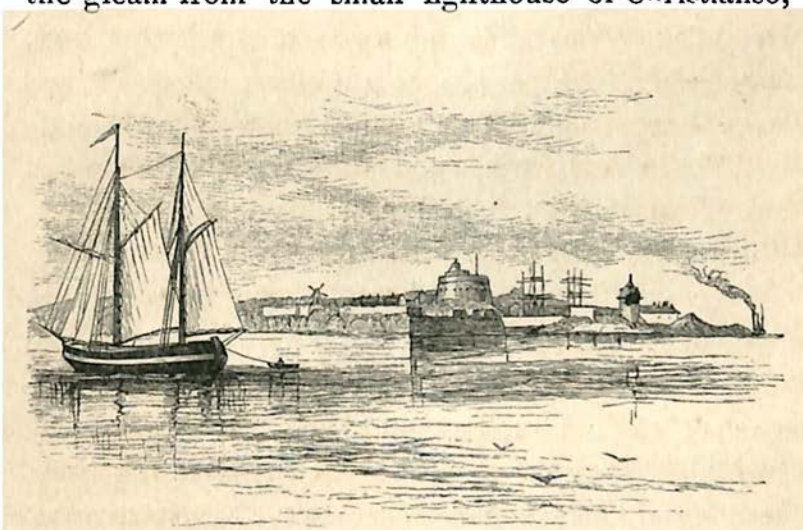
The sea walks at Svanike are very fine and interesting, especially when you have passed beyond sight and sound of all inhabited region. Or you may take boat, and paddle about the coast, and inspect the rocks and caves, those grand bulwarks of Nature, so wild and impressive when seen from their base, and

the sea tosses your boat about, and throws its spray back in your face. In fine weather, with a steady breeze blowing, you may sail across to Christiansö, and inspect the little place, with its fortifications that are no longer needed. You may sail round it, and discover that the distant cloud no bigger than a man's hand is really formidable, and quite as much green as white. And if the wind drops suddenly, and the worst comes to the worst, it is a harbour of refuge, and its simple people will make you welcome. But the boatmen about here are weather prophets, and, as a rule, if they are willing to take you out, they are pretty sure to bring you back again. Like all other seas, the Baltic has its share of storms and tempests; but in summer the weather seldom breaks up without warning.

In quiet times, when the hotel is pretty well deserted, and excursion boats are not running, a sojourn at Svanike must not only be bearable but charming. The landlady, Frau Munthe, makes you very comfortable and is above the ordinary type of hostesses. For Bornholm it is an exceptional hotel. Families often come from Copenhagen and other places, and stay here for the season.

The sitting-rooms were very pleasant. The sea rolled up to within a few yards of the windows, and stretched out and away in all its beauty. Sea breezes blew in with life and healing on their wings to all who came from crowded, enervating towns. We felt their influence while lounging at the open

windows, long after darkness had fallen, and the stars had come out, and the sea was a great invisible expanse, mysterious as the heavens above. We listened to the constant plashing of the water, and watched fishing-boats putting out, until nothing remained of them but their lights. Far away was one solitary bright flash, like a distant star or planet; the gleam from the small lighthouse of Christiansö,



CHRISTIANSÖ.

that on many a tempestuous night has enabled storm-tossed vessels to reach the safe refuge of its haven.

Next morning we entered upon our third and last day's drive while all the freshness of the early hours still lay upon the earth. Not without regret we bade farewell to our hostess, who so singularly combined comfort with simplicity. But there was still much to be done and seen, and we

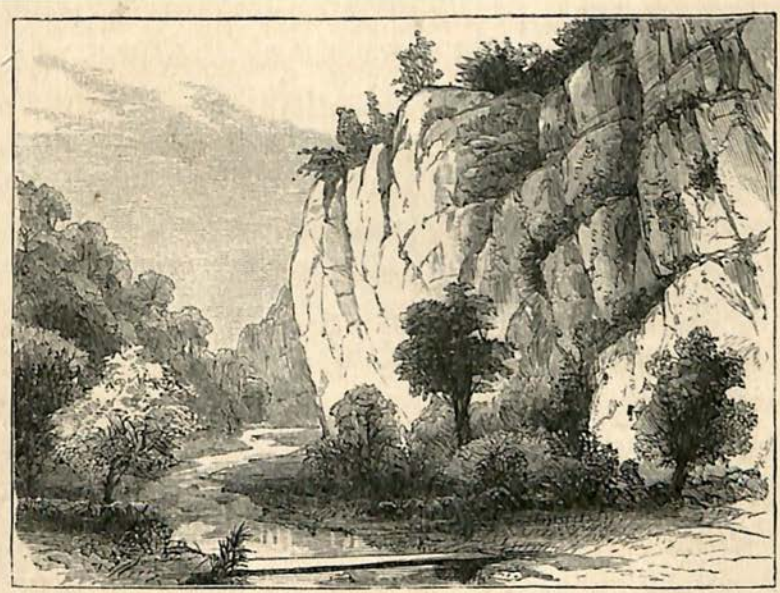
were almost as far from Rönne as one could be on this little island.

To-day's experiences were different from any that had gone before. The sea-coast was abandoned, and our way lay across the island. The character of the scenery was changed. Hitherto we had journeyed through flat country, very fertile and flourishing, but only wooded here and there near the shore, as at Dyndalen. The landscape was now undulating, and, approaching the interior, beautifully wooded. There were long tracts of forest through which roads had been cut, wild and desolate almost as an American prairie. At length we reached Almindingen, our morning's resting-place.

An inn in the very heart of the forest; miles and miles, as it seemed, from any other human habitation. A rude, rough inn, where they give you of their best, and put you up if need be. But if you found yourself alone in an upper room at midnight, shrouded by gloomy trees, nerves set thrilling by a wind moaning amidst the branches, instinctively you would lock or barricade the door. The people were rough and humble as their surroundings, but they looked honest and willing. Probably they would not have molested you even with doors and windows wide open all through the dark hours. At midnight it must be weird and thrilling enough; at mid-day it was simply delightful—Eden: Arcadie.

To reach it we had passed through long roads

cut out of this beautiful and solitary forest; wild woods, tangle and undergrowth on all sides. Trees sometimes overarching, where we entered from the sun's glare into luxurious shade. Again, there were plantations of firs, which threw no shade upon the hot, white road, but kept it selfishly for



ALMINDINGEN.

themselves. You might plunge in amongst them and be cool, but the roads between were sandy and scorching. The drive seemed endless. The island appeared suddenly to have expanded to wonderful dimensions. Its aspect was utterly changed. We could hardly realise that we were still in Bornholm. Much as we had enjoyed the last two days, the

waving fields of corn, the hay-making and scented clover, all the multiplied signs of prosperity and abundance, this change was inexpressibly grateful. All this green was so soothing to the eye. Had it come first instead of last in the excursion, it would not have seemed half so delightful and refreshing. Beautiful in itself, wild, desolate and limitless as were these wooded solitudes, it was the contrast with what had gone before that made them stand out with strange and startling effect.

Finally we turned, as it seemed, into the very heart of the wood, and lo! mysteriously as Jack's beanstalk, which sprang up in a night, we stood before this solitary inn. A large building in its way, roughly furnished. Rooms where nothing but your own footsteps echoed on the bare boards, tread lightly as you would, and where very little light ever seemed to penetrate. But that was the fault of the trees, or the architect, not that the people loved deeds of darkness.

Whilst our humble fare was a-preparing—their resources seemed limited to the poultry-yard, and the chicken presently placed before us was even then cackling and laying its plans for the future—whilst, then, murder was being committed on our behalf, we went forth to see the wonders of the valley.

The walk led to Echodalen, most lovely forest walk imaginable, in unfrequented paths, through the very thick of the forest trees. Now we stood on a height and looked down richly-wooded slopes,

made musical by a shallow stream. Wild flowers and fruit abounded — not a few of the trees bore ripe red cherries—until the downward path ended in a long open valley, where cattle grazed, and the stream ran murmuring with cool, refreshing sound. On one hand, deep forests tempting one to stray out of the right path; on the other, abrupt and precipitous cliffs, bare of everything but moss and time-honoured lichen; the only rugged signs of unproductive nature in all this luxuriance of wood and vale and pasture.

This was Echodalen, though we never found the echo.

We went up the steep cliffs, still in shadow and shine of endless woods. We were utterly alone, no sight or sound of life, and trusted to chance to take us back to that lonely inn, where by this time our chicken had had its destiny cut short, had sung its swan's song. Ever ascending through the limitless forest, any number of specimens of ferns and wild flowers, known and unknown, were at our command, if we could only have preserved them

At last a tower on the highest ground, and a glorious view from it. The whole of Bornholm seemed disclosed at one glance. All the waving fields of corn, the distant ruins of Hammershuus; all the landmarks we had passed; the circular churches, looking from a distance more warlike than ecclesiastical. And all around, the glorious sea a shimmering sapphire sheet of water, Christiansö afar off.

At our feet acres and acres of wooded undulations; an ocean of green, restless and swaying as the distant ocean itself.

At the foot of the tower was a wide forest road, broad enough to admit half a dozen chariots abreast, green and mossy underfoot. On either side, the forest thicket lured one to unknown regions, or to regions impenetrable. The road was long and led out into the world, away from forest life and scenes. This was not what we wanted, so we plunged into the wood down a tempting by-path. We passed numerous cherry trees, and a ruin of which we could not read the interpretation; romantic dells and craggy rocks that looked like ruined castles in themselves.

Presently, we hardly knew how, we found ourselves at our solitary inn. They had laid our table under the trees. It was a charming dining-room. For ceiling we had the branches of spreading oaks and elms, for decoration the blue sky beyond. Our carpet was of moss, and we had unceasing music in the free and friendly winds that rustled the leaves and sang in the branches. What mattered that the fare was humble, our couch a bare bench, our table a wooden board on tressels? What mattered that dry bread was our ambrosia and sparkling ale of the mildest our nectar? Kings in their palaces might envy us, and all those who after us shall go and do likewise.

After this feast of chicken and this flow of ale, we still had leisure. Jehu evidently appreciated his

quarters, for he declared that we might yet linger for an hour or two. We were nothing loth. The charms of Rönne a hundred times multiplied could not compare with these wild and solitary woods. So we wandered away into by-paths and sylvan glades, lone and silent, bird and squirrel-haunted. Snake-haunted too, for every now and then, gliding and writhing through the moss, we saw, with a certain thrill, a green creature raise its small head and shoot out a forked tongue, and then hurry away to its hole. E., strong young Norwegian though he was, burning the student's midnight oil and growing familiar with the Classics, could never grow accustomed to the sight of a snake. Whenever and wherever we came across these small, creeping, dangerous-looking vipers, he would stand and tremble and turn pale, spellbound and powerless. Happily they are only too glad to get away from you, and will not attack unless first meddled with or alarmed or trodden upon by accident.

And what vitality they have in their small bodies. I remember, once, walking through the beautiful grounds of Robert Were Fox, of Penjerrick—whose Reminiscences in the Journal of Caroline Fox have given pleasure to so many. He and my beloved late Rector of Falmouth were having an eloquent and animated discussion, to which I was listening with the delight of appreciation and the veneration due from youth to age. It was not given to many to be often in the company of two such men of the old

school; and my dear Rector, courtly amidst courtiers, the counsellor of prelates and the intimate of kings, is now almost the last of his race. Walking, we came upon one of the gardeners looking curiously at a hole in the ground.

"What have you found?" asked the master of Penjerrick.

"Well, sir," said the gardener, "I'm fairly puzzled. I chopped a snake in half just now, as he was springing into his hole. The first half jumped down, and the second half jumped clean after it. If I hadn't seen it, sir, I should have believed it impossible." This was delivered in the broad Cornish dialect we will not attempt; and we left the man still looking into the hole, as if he expected the snake to reappear, whole and undivided.

But at Almindingen we escaped all contact with our natural enemies. Wandered through forest glades, lingered beside quiet pools, and came upon two trees that had wedded and become one—an oak and an ash—so that looking upward you saw a mingling of two kinds of leaves, apparently on the same branch. Silence and solitude were perfect. We met no one, and had the wood to ourselves. Time passed, until we felt that we must linger no longer. Jehu evidently was of the same opinion, for on returning to the inn we found that he had harnessed his cattle, and was making the place echo with whip cracks.

We left with sorrow. The honest people came

and wished us a pleasant drive; the fowls in the barnyard were chanting a requiem over a missing member—a poultry-wake in a far-off land. We turned under the spreading branches, and the carriage bowled silently over smooth, soft turf. For some distance we still found ourselves in forest scenes. Then all passed away, the last glade, the last tree. We looked back with regret—as one so often looks back in life. Four hours of unspeakable pleasure and delight had been spent amidst these sylvan solitudes. We should have no more like them in Bornholm.

Once more a scene of abundance. Waving cornfields, and barns receiving waggon-loads of hay; great storehouses for future use. We passed through Aakirkeby, the only inland town or village we had seen: the only one, I believe, existing in Bornholm. It was singularly quaint and pretty. Its houses were nearly all painted rose colour, and many of them were dotted about the land outside the boundaries of the village. They were quite large and flourishing, adorned with gardens blooming with great tree-fuchsias and blazing with geraniums, whilst roses and old-fashioned flowers scented the air. The delicate tint of the houses seemed to throw a feeling of endless festivity over the place, as if it was reserved only for the pleasant sides of life—les beaux jours de la vie. The church was old and singular; but the sexton, away haymaking, had been too wise in his generation to leave the doors open.

A boy from a chemist's went off in search of him with the greatest readiness. It took at least a quarter of an hour to find the absentee. When he returned we were anxious to thank and reward him for so much service and civility. But coming down the churchyard with the sexton, who was blacksmith as well as haymaker, the lad seemed to divine our intention, and with a delicacy which did him honour, he took off his cap and slipped away through a gate on the other side. Such natures go straight to one's heart. Here was just the lad and just the nature one delights to meet, would like to uphold and advance through life, and do one's best to keep unspoiled by the world. We saw him no more, but he dwells in the memory for ever.

The haymaker, sexton, and blacksmith in one, advanced with his great keys and an apology for his absence. He could not be in two places at once, and everyone went haymaking who could do so. He threw wide the doors, and pointed to some runic stones in the porch ; how there, or why, or when, no one knew. There was an old font with runic inscriptions, roughly carved, but interesting from its age. The small interior was cut up by pillars and arches and arcades, all whitewashed like every other church in this part of the world ; but built, the old blacksmith declared, of black marble. There were some extraordinary head-dresses upon the communion table, fearfully and wonderfully made, reposing in front of lighted candles. The old man gave us a

reason for their being here rather than in a museum of antiquities. I forget his reason: a burial, or a bridal, or a penance: I think the latter. They belonged to the most illustrious lady of the neighbourhood, and were to be there for a certain number of days.

The square tower had four storeys, and of course we mounted them all; a narrowing, suffocating experience. The old sexton threw wide the creaking shutters and let in daylight upon darkness, whilst we looked upon the world from the four points of the compass. The quaint and lively village was at our feet; Rönne on the one side, our beloved Almindingen on the other, with its forest groves and glades; Svanike, which we had left that morning. It seemed quite a far-off time, so much had we since seen and done.

In the distance, and hardly to be distinguished, were the ruins of Hammershuus. We wondered how the Frenchman who had held a cow reception had fared, and how far he had gone on his travels. He was taking things quietly, and perhaps was still at Hammershuus, meditating amongst the ruins: as profitable a subject as tombs, and more interesting. Or he might even have reached Hasle, and be making acquaintance with its brown people. The old sexton pointed it out, but all shades were lost in the distance. If everything there was brown, here, at any rate, all things were couleur de rose. And if our youthful messenger was to be taken as an example

of the inhabitants, they were richly gifted in graces also. But he was surely an exception to the general rule. It would be too great delight to come upon a whole community of such natures.

Yet our old sexton was an exception too, and almost courtly in manner. When we left, he accompanied us to the carriage, and stood outside the churchyard gate, hat in hand, with the unconscious attitude of good breeding, dismissing us with a bow that was quite dignified. Was he another Harmonious Blacksmith, and had his music refined him? Or was it inborn? Or are the people of Aakirkeby really and truly a race apart? The three, at any rate, with whom we came into contact were so: the chemist, his boy, and the old haymaking blacksmith-sexton.

We went our way, gradually approaching Rönne and the end of our drive. Three days to be remembered; days of uninterrupted sunshine and happiness. An island that stands out above most others; to which we would gladly some day return, quiet and simple as are its attractions. There is a charm about it very difficult to interpret: hard to define even whilst it was under experience. It was like a subtle perfume, ever there, yet ever vanishing. The troubles of life were forgotten; one's heart overflowed with happiness. Days passed gilded with sunshine that found a reflection in the brain, spread a glamour over the vision, seemed to run through the veins. Whatever it might be, there was the

influence, never for one moment absent during those three memorable days.

No wonder that we entered Rönne almost with feelings of depression. "All that's bright must fade, the brightest still the fleetest." Jehu spoilt himself and his civility by charging half as much again as he had bargained for. Boots upheld him, and the inn people ranged themselves on his side. They were the only bad specimens we met with in all the island.

There was nothing for it but to yield to his unjust demand. We could not dispute or fight it out; we would not let it disturb our three days' happiness. But we warned Jehu that cheating never prospers, and that the way of transgressors is hard. By this time he had the money in hand, and did not seem to mind the lecture. Perhaps he was born without a conscience, and so was to be pitied. We could not examine him phrenologically, and his face was not that of a man given to evil ways. Yet there was a cunning look in his eyes, as he went off counting his hoard in company with Boots, who for his part had a face that would have done credit to Madame Tussaud's Room of Horrors. We should not wonder if he came to be hanged some day, unless he was born to be drowned. The two disappeared in the shed that formed one side of the courtyard, and there evidently divided the spoil.

Rönne looked the same as when we had left it, only that then we had seen it in morning sunshine,

and now the afternoon shadows were lengthening. The streets were deserted; the little square also. It was difficult to kill time.

But evening fell, and about nine o'clock we went down to the harbour. The boat was getting up steam. The pier was crowded. There was nothing but talking and shouting and demonstrative farewells repeated for the twentieth time. At ten o'clock down came the mails. A few moments after the gangway was withdrawn. We steamed out of the harbour. The little crowd grew indistinct. Rönne fell away.

For us, Bornholm was over. A spot to remain green in the memory for ever, a treasure island. We launched out into deep waters. The lighthouse flashed its beacon long after everything else had faded. Under the stars we thought over all we had seen and gone through. The present darkness made the remembrance of all that past sunshine, those sea-girt cliffs, those fields ripening to harvest, only the more vivid and the more abiding.

CHAPTER XVII.

GOTLAND.

ONCE again we set sail from Stockholm. This time our destination was Gotland, also an island of the Baltic. In its way, is it not the most wonderful of all islands? Yet how few seem to know anything about it. They have heard of such a place, they may tell you; perhaps will mark its position on the map; believe that the title of the King of Sweden's second son is Duke of Gotland; and there it ends. Yet if Gotland were only a little more accessible: if its shores were washed by the waters of the English Channel instead of those of the Baltic: it would be thought one of the wonders of the world.

We left Stockholm about five o'clock in the evening. For the first and only time in our experience the air on Malar Lake was warm; its beauties were at their best. It was nothing short of an earthly paradise. Time went on, and a glorious sunset flushed earth and sky. Islands and wooded

shores were bathed in gold. The colours of the waters would have composed a rainbow. They are no ordinary sunsets in these Northern skies; skies varying every moment almost like the changes of a kaleidoscope. If they are brighter than usual old sailors say there is going to be a change of weather. No change to-night could have been for the better, and so we hoped no change was in store.

Malar Lake seems to have innumerable outlets, and this evening we soon turned into new waters. Now, in narrow straits, we almost touched the land and looked far into deepening forest glades. Then we launched out upon wide crescents and circles, but always and at all times surrounded by solitary shores. Towns or villages there were none; few signs of life; a world given up to itself, where the wild birds build and sing. The hours vanished until all light and colour fled from the sky, and darkness fell. About ten o'clock we entered the Baltic.

Just before doing so, a passenger landed at a settlement consisting of a solitary lighthouse and a small cottage or two for the keepers. A brig lay at anchor in the sheltered waters, and our passenger, her skipper, had been to Stockholm concerning freight. As soon as we were in sight, a boat shot out from her, came alongside, and before long we had left them far behind.

Our steamer was small but not uncomfortable. Her captain was rough and hardy, but thoughtful as though he had had the politest training in the world.

One old man, also a passenger, spoke excellent English. He, too, had passed his life on the troubled waters of earth, and had been to Stockholm to seek cargo for his brig, lying in Wisby harbour. But he had not been successful, and declared that times were changed. Brokers and shippers wanted their freights carried for nothing, and the system did not pay.

He was an amusing old man, with a good deal of dry humour; appeared to have gone through life with a certain amount of observation, and gave us the benefit of his wisdom. His weird tales of the people at home and abroad were endless; adventures that made one's hair stand on end, and stories that caused one's flesh to creep. He abounded in murders and suicides that had come within his own knowledge; records of people who had disappeared overboard on dark nights, without rhyme or reason, or had been spirited away, none ever knew how or where.

So we supped upon horrors unfolded with dramatic power, and his quaint humour and sayings shortened the night. The stars were brilliant. Our vessel in the open sea rolled and strained uneasily, though there was little swell upon the water. But she was small and narrow, and lightly charged. In some of their rough seas a passage in her would prove an ordeal to be recorded. It blew cold, too, upon these wider waters, under the dark night sky. There was no warmth in all those flashing, trembling

stars, though much beauty. The skipper, thoughtful as I have described him, had rugs brought up for our benefit, and seats placed under the lee of his cabin on the bridge. There we sat and chatted and listened to creeping tales, far into the small hours. The stewardess brought us coffee; the captain, in largeness of heart, insisted upon adding cognac. In the rare intervals of silence we listened to the throb of the engines, the rush of the paddles ploughing the wide waste. But there came a moment when even the skipper and his old chum—they had been boys together at sea fifty years ago—thought it time to turn in. An hour or two's sleep would enable one the better to appreciate the wonders of Gotland.

About five o'clock the next morning we entered Wisby harbour, a scene to be remembered. The sun had risen; all the freshness of early morning was upon the earth. The place was still sleeping, and looked a dead world as we steamed up within the long breakwater. Twice dead, for above the houses sharply outlined against the clear morning sky, were wonderful and romantic ruins; ruin upon ruin. Singular-looking minaret towers uprose above all else, like the towers of an Eastern mosque. The houses, built on slopes, appeared one above another. The whole was encircled by ancient massive walls, with towers and gateways at frequent intervals. We might have been approaching some Eastern city, and almost expected to be greeted by dark-skinned Moors in flowing garb.

At the landing-place a small crowd of some twelve or fifteen people had assembled. No flashing Orientals draped in abbas; nothing more picturesque than ordinary Northern folk, calm and quiet; half of them town boys, who are always first on the alert in scenes of excitement.

The hotels—such as they are in Wisby—had not awakened, and there was no one in this small crowd to represent them. We felt adrift, until the skipper and his old chum recommended us to a house where we should be comfortable, if nothing more. There was no restaurant attached to it, said they, but everything of that sort would be found in the town. So we departed with a guide, who certainly was the very opposite to anything Eastern or interesting.

He led the way up the quay, through narrow turnings, over the most horribly paved streets in the world. All houses and windows were closed, doors barred against invasion.

We reached our quarters, at the foot of a sharp ascent, paved, as usual in Wisby, with stones like petrified eggs, hard end upwards. The house was closed. We knocked for admission. Hollow sounds echoed through a long passage, but no other response. We repeated the summons. Presently distant, shuffling footsteps, a growl like the first roll of thunder, bolts impatiently undrawn, accompanied by what sounded like strong language, but was possibly only a Wisby form of welcome and benediction.

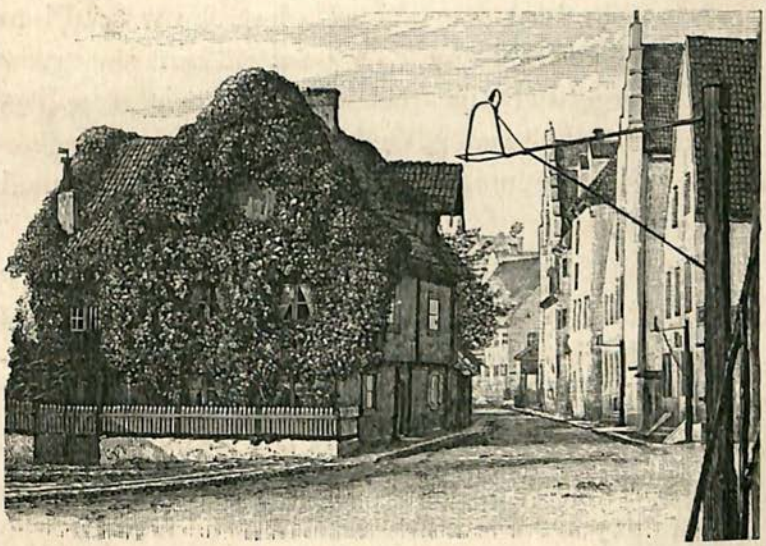
The door half opened, and a startling head of hair appeared, as if its owner had also supped all night upon horrors. This was the general factotum of the house; a man who would do everything or nothing for you, according as you made it worth his while.

Our guide took up the tale. Though not outwardly favoured, he was really a decent specimen, and in an unknown tongue soundly rebuked our lazy doorkeeper for his sluggard ways. He talked with such good effect that the sleepy eyelids opened their widest, the affrighted door did likewise; we were admitted and escorted to rooms above, clean and satisfactory. Our foothold in Wisby was secured.

Gotland, it may at once be remarked, is the exact opposite to Bornholm. The interest of the latter lies not in its capital, but is spread over the whole island. The interest of Gotland, on the contrary, centres in Wisby, and the remainder of the island is comparatively uninteresting, barren, dreary and unproductive; given over to great stretches of moorland, to peat-fields dark and gloomy, yet with a certain fine tone about them reminding one of the Shetland moors. But Shetland has hills and slopes and long-drawn undulations cleaving the sky, singularly attractive in their lonely charm. Gotland is flat, unfertile, with a great deal of barren, stony, unromantic ground. It has its cultivated portions, and agriculture is a source of industry; but the general

impression of the island is not one of prosperity and abundance. The fields of golden corn, the sweet clover and scented hay, the laughing, happy haymakers, which had so charmed and gladdened one's heart and eyes in Bornholm, were here conspicuous by their absence.

But how sing the charms of Wisby? What



WISBY.

other country had such a capital? Such an accumulation of ruins, such wonderful and perfect old walls? It stands alone in the world.

Wisby loudly proclaims its antiquity. Gotland was once the key of the Baltic, a centre of commerce and industry. It waxed rich and great. The stream of industry between Asia and Western

Europe flowed past Gotland, and made it prosperous and important. This was about the eleventh century. The earlier history of Wisby is unknown, but is supposed to date back to the eighth century.

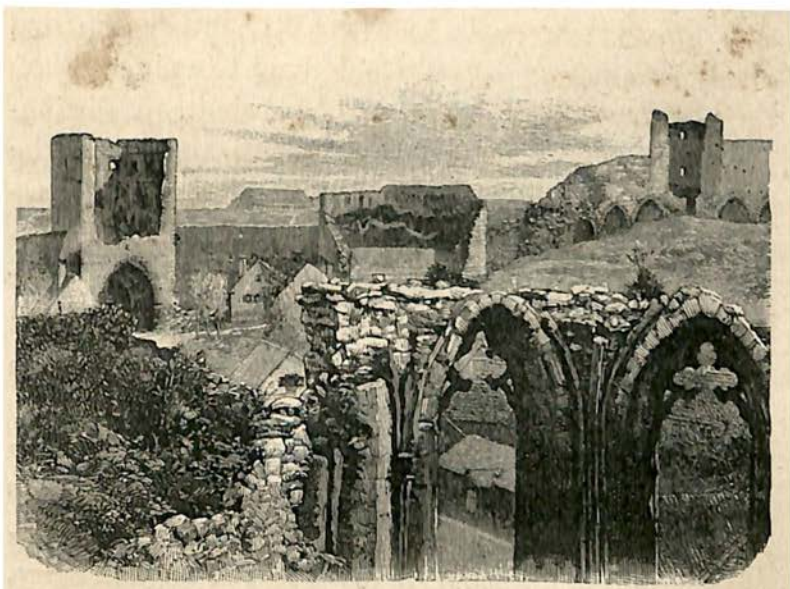
About the thirteenth century, before the time of the Crusades, a good deal of the Eastern trade diverted to Southern Europe, and began to find its way round the Cape of Good Hope. The prosperity of Gotland was affected, but she was still to remain flourishing for a season. Then she grew proud, forgetting that before Honour is Humility, separated from Sweden, declared her independence.

Perhaps this, more than anything else, contributed to her downfall.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries she possessed many convents, eighteen churches, and was surrounded by massive walls, guarded by great gateways and numerous watch-towers. It is the wonderful ruins of these churches, the marvellous walls and towers, that can yet scarcely be called ruins, that form to-day the unrivalled attraction of Wisby.

After declaring its independence, it was attacked and plundered by Waldemar, King of Denmark. Nearly two thousand of its people were slain and many of its treasures carried off in shiploads. But the principal treasure-boat was lost in a great storm and went down to enrich the mermaids at the bottom of the deep blue sea. If one could only dive and gather these bright, glistening gems that lie there "unrecked of and in vain!"

After this, Wisby went through vicissitudes and disturbances, and gradually declined. Trade and prosperity left her, wealth diminished, her influence ceased. She grew feeble and died out. But she has left standing this wealth of Gothic ruins which make her one of the most remarkable towns in the world, without a rival.



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Our first care that morning was to discover a means of breaking our fast, for we were ourselves rapidly qualifying for ruins. A restaurant was discovered near our rooms, and good, bad or indifferent as it might be, we boldly entered. A maiden declared that breakfast was quite possible, accompanied by every earthly delicacy. This was a libel on her part,

but never mind; no doubt she spoke according to her lights.

She was spreading one of the many tables, when in came the landlady, with a very civilised reverence for this out of the world spot. Next she attacked the maiden all forlorn for thus setting for the "quality." Her jargon sounded like so much Chinese, but to E. it was perfectly intelligible and very amusing. We were transferred to an inner room two steps higher in the world, evidently a distinction something like the ancient above and below the salt. If anything, it was less comfortable, for we were nearer the kitchen. Frying, baking, and brewing of coffee was going forward. When the door opened, sound and scent and a heated air mingled their charms, and made themselves more free than welcome of our neighbourhood.

It all passed away. When we went forth again Wisby was waking up. Life began to stir, doors and windows to open, the business of the day commenced. It was not at any time bustling or noisy, crowded or distracting. We had the place largely to ourselves. But it plunged us in a dream of wonder and romance which remained as long as walls and ruined churches, watch-towers and old gateways were present to mesmerise us with their singular charm and influence.

The town itself is well situated upon the sea, and the walks by the shore are very interesting. On the one hand, the ever-flashing and restless water; on

the other, the rising walls, towers and ruins conspicuous above the houses. Ruins crumbling with the burden of centuries. Here a pointed archway, framing the sky; there a long, roofless church, moss grown, with an east wall still standing more perfect than all the rest, beautiful with pointed windows and

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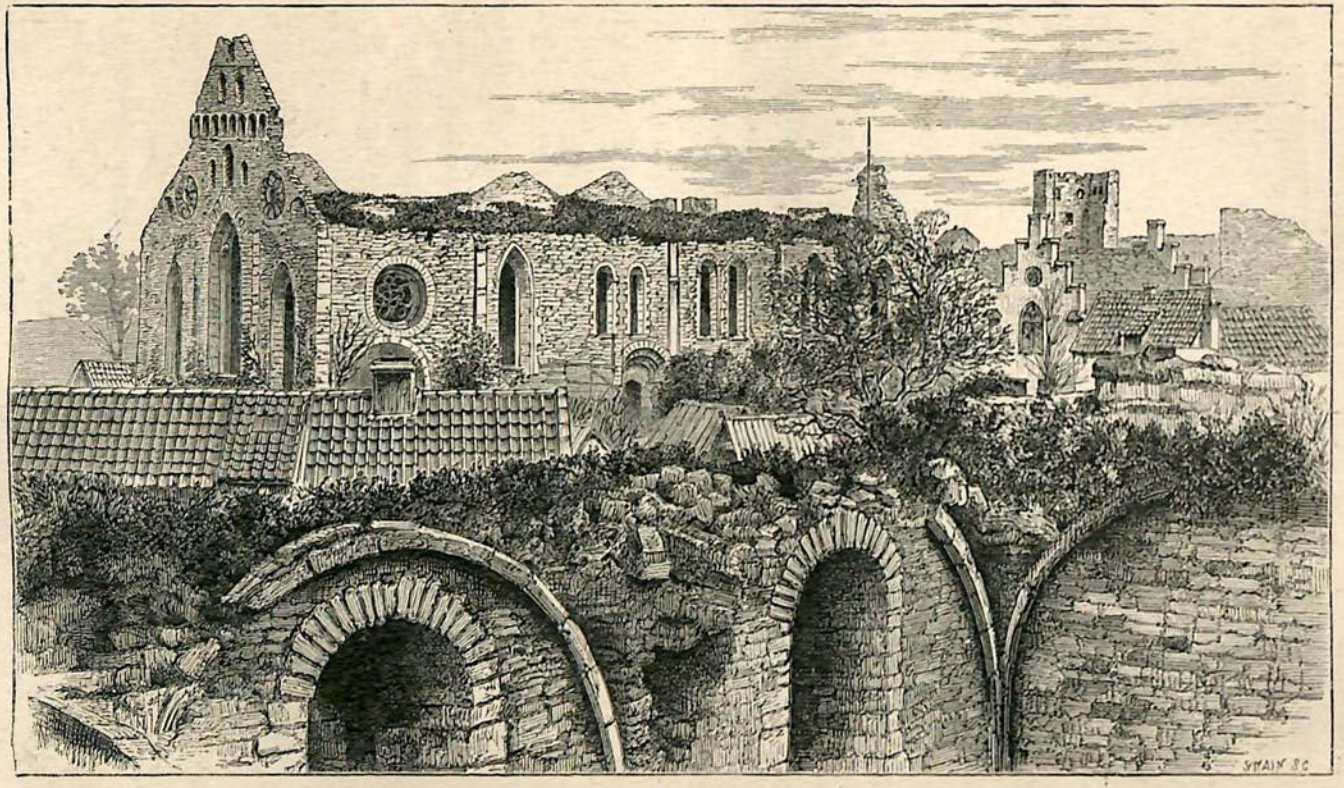
Gothic tracery, and perhaps a rose with nothing left of it but the outer circle. Towers meet the eye everywhere, square and castellated, many of them broken away into crumbling, ivy-crowned fragments.

In your walks about the town you are constantly coming upon one of these ruins. Many of them are

closely surrounded by houses and all sorts of impossible little courts and alleys. Opening a door at a venture, you suddenly disclose one of these courts, with perhaps a trailing vine about it to make it green and fresh and beautiful. At the end, if you go down, you are bewildered by the presence of a great ruin of which you had no previous conception. Under its very shadow the poor live in crowds, indifferent to its charms, or to anything except the daily struggle for existence.

Ruins seem to multiply. You turn a corner, and at the end of a bit of quaint street is one of the old gateways, with massive tower and loopholes, the upper part half in ruins. On your left is a Gothic arch, also part of a ruined church, standing almost alone, and full of refinement. To the right, carrying your eye upwards, you observe the encircling walls with all their towers. Most conspicuous of all, because so different in style, are the minarets of the cathedral, which throw an Eastern glamour and atmosphere over the whole town.

The streets are, many of them, full of an interest of their own. They are built without plan or design; narrow, tortuous, up and down hill, horribly paved, yet of great charm; the charm of antiquity. Some of the houses date back to the middle ages, and remind one of Nuremberg. But Nuremberg, wonderful as the old town is, has none of the charm of these ruins, which make of Wisby an artistic Gothic paradise.



WISBY.

What matter if the rest of the island be comparatively barren and deserted? Within the walls of Wisby you are independent of all outer influence. If you have not Nature, you have Art in perfection, in its most beautiful and refined, most rare form and aspect; the beautifying and decaying work of centuries. Ruins that are perfect, because hitherto untouched by renovation.

To walk the streets in ordinary boots is an expiation severe as any practised by ancient monks. The hired carriages, clumsily built, tear up and down the narrow stony thoroughfares with a crash that would wake the dead. They cut corners short, and swirl round curves as if pursued by a legion of demons. You are sent flying right and left in your seat, with a vengeance that would shake the very teeth out of your head, and are only saved from shipwreck by a vigorous clutch at the woodwork; just as a despairing rider hangs on to the mane of his horse. Happily you are soon out of the town, away in the open country, where your shattered frame has some chance of recovery, and your ruffled plumage gradually settles down.

The climate is very mild, and many flowers, fruits and vegetables grow here that find no place elsewhere. We landed on market-day, and market is held in the old square, under the walls and shadow of the cathedral. Buyers and sellers were diligently at work. Country barrows, drawn by donkeys and the small horses for which Gotland is famous, groaned

under their weight of wares. Small, sour cherries, abundance of currants and gooseberries, splendid vegetables, blushing and blooming flowers. There was much fish also, very good of its kind. Half the market-place was given up to ironmongery; and

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crockery and pottery were spread out on straw for the temptation of extravagant housewives. There was a sound in the air of many voices, and the donkeys frequently brayed, as if determined not to be outdone in this matter by mere men and women. The people were quaint and countrified, but clean and healthy-

looking, and many of the women wore curious head-dresses and gold ornaments. Most of these had come in with their poultry and butter and eggs; small eggs, worthy of the very small fowl that lay beside them.

Our little guide was astonished at our interest in the market. But in truth it was not only amusing; it was the only sign of life and excitement we had found in this veritable Dead City of the Baltic. He was a neat little guide, with a sunny face, amiable and honest-looking, who conversed rapidly with E., and resorted to signs when he particularly wished to impress the unfortunate Englishman, who had no Swedish, and was evidently an object of compassion. The rough pavement seemed a delight to him; his feet flew over the sharp stones, in search of keys or information, as if they had been the softest lawn.

He led us to the sea walks, and showed us where the mulberries grew in abundance, on trees like currant bushes. But the fruit was not yet ripe. "Before I come or after I am gone, the roses always bloom." There were chestnut trees also, and fruit-laden vines growing in the open air, of which the people are very proud.

The keys of the ruins—for they are kept locked—are in the custody of the hospital porter. Of course he was not to be found. His vrouw thought he might be in the market, or he might be elsewhere. This seemed probable. He was certainly

playing truant, for evidently he was not at his post. Should we like to go over the hospital? But we had had experiences of hospitals in remote places: sights that remained unfading: especially one of Santiago recollection: and declined the offer. Why harrow one's feelings when no good is to come of it?

Our nimble little guide at last found the errant

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doorkeeper in a house not far off. Walls bore a sign and windows an intimation that beer and wine were dispensed there. The good man had been innocently enjoying himself. The care of the hospital and the contemplation of the ruins were depressing influences. He came out in the best of humours, quite at our service. The keys were in his possession.

Like a wise man he never parted with them. Not a weighty bunch, but two small duplicates, at whose touch, like an Open-Sesame, all gates flew back.

Some of the gates were already open, and ruins in the hands of restorers: those despoilers of the beautiful that are sometimes necessary. One ruin, especially, was being thoroughly overhauled, and from a height there came down a huge bit of stone so close to our heads that, accompanied by a far-off demoniacal laugh, it looked very much as if chance had not had much to do with the adventure. Another inch or two, and not possessing Irishmen's skulls, we should certainly have been conveyed to the hospital, for ever unconscious to all its inner sights and sounds. The mason evidently meant to give us a fright, but he might have done more. We beat a wholesome retreat, but the overseer, coming in at the very moment, administered such a wordy castigation to the unseen Vulcan, that for some time to come his evil propensities must have had rest.

Our older guide pointed out all the beauties of the ruins, which, indeed, needed no interpreter. Crumbling remains of Gothic tracery; exquisite oriel windows, still perfect with the exception of the glass; ornamentation often delicate as lace work, in all the refinement of age and partial decay. Wonderful arches standing alone, spanning the whole ruin from north to south, framing the east walls and windows beyond. Delicate flying arches, sometimes three or

four of them one behind another. Crumbling walls and masonry on all sides, often ivy-laden.

We mounted some of them by unseen staircases in the towers; fragments of stone steps now hardly yielding foothold. Outside, we trod the narrow ways, giddy with the height and a sense of insecurity.

The view was wonderful. All round and about us were these ruins. Conspicuous above all stood out the white walls and minaret towers of the cathedral. At our feet, the small, curious town, its mazy streets narrow and uneven; steep slopes where the houses rose one above another, often seemed falling into each other. Surrounding all were the old walls with their watch-towers and gateways.

Of the forty-eight towers once standing, thirty-eight are still sufficiently perfect to look formidable. Some have been turned into store-rooms; others are inhabited. They date back to the thirteenth century, yet are not the original walls of Wisby. Beyond the walls is the "Gallows Hill," where, formerly, people were put to death and buried; and here a ruined church—the only one outside the walls—is robbed of its just romance by so melancholy an association. The small harbour of the town, the strong break-water, the flashing sea beyond, complete an unrivalled picture.

Wisby has so shrunken, deteriorated and died out, that half the space within her walls has become barren and unoccupied. At night all is mysteriously dark and silent, and the shadows of the great walls

impress one uncomfortably. The deserted portion is unlighted. Even the chief streets have nothing better than a long pole supporting an iron branch, looking itself very much like a gallows intended for sacrifice. Into this an oil lamp is placed, which just serves to make darkness visible.

When the moon is full, Wisby is at its best. She shines with a pure, cold light upon all these ruins, and they look like what they are, ghosts and remnants of a departed world. Every detail is subdued and softened and made wonderfully romantic by the pale light, so intensely bright and silvery under these Northern skies. From the hill above the cathedral the view is matchless; "change and decay in all around I see," you may well exclaim; whilst the dark unchanging sea beyond is made visible by the moonbeams.

That afternoon we had left the ruins and the town, and dismissed our little guide for a time. Committing ourselves to the tender mercies of a primitive driver, and the mercies of a "Victoria," primitive also, but not tender, we had dashed and crashed up the hilly streets, and passed through one of the great solemn gateways out into the country. Fridhem, a place some miles from Wisby, was the object of our ambition. It is inhabited by Princess Eugénie, sister of the King of Sweden, and is the only place on the island of the least importance.

The road led through a barren, uninteresting country, beside the one railway Wisby has had the

enterprise to construct: a narrow-gauge single line, about five miles long. We passed many a stony field where it seemed hopeless to look for cultivation, varied now and then by a plantation of stunted fir trees. The sea to our right was seldom visible.

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After a good deal of such monotonous and unchanging scenery, we found ourselves at Fridhem: a retired spot, perfection of a summer retreat. In winter it must be equally depressing. The house was large for Gotland, and built of wood, deli-

ciously cool and pleasant-looking; surrounded by trees, except where it faced the sea, which broke almost at its very foundations. The cliff was high, and a sloping bank and staircases led down to the shore. A verandah ran the whole length of the house. Here one could sit the livelong day, revelling in sunshine and blue sky and sparkling sea, in perfect quiet and repose. There was a studied wildness about the grounds far better than a more precise arrangement, and one was free to wander about at will. Just beyond them was the highest point of the island, where you might throw yourself on the grassy slopes and gaze for ever upon the boundless sea, the "sounding ocean." Here, too, were steps in the rocky cliffs to conduct you to the white, dazzling beach, where to-day the blue water broke in quiet ripples, kindliest and most wooing of its moods.

After this, Jehu turned inland. The scenery was always the same; monotonous and unproductive. Sometimes we came to larger and deeper plantations, and that was all. Long roads bordered by flat fields, and never so much as a hill or an undulation. But presently we did reach a hill, and the second object in our drive. It was at the end of a short by-road, and formed part of a small estate. "Upon this hill there grew a tower," from which we saw the whole island stretched out as a map. Here we at once realised the difference between Gotland and Bornholm. Nothing arrested the eye except its churches dotted about, many of which are old and very inter-

esting to the antiquarian, but very different from the round churches of Bornholm.

At our feet in this singular spot was a tomb in the midst of the garden, the eccentric idea of a former proprietor. Through wrought-iron gates one saw coffins, great and small, marked with gold letters. A melancholy object; yet the whole neighbourhood, so deserted by the living, seemed scarcely an unmeet resting-place for the dead.

We were not sorry to find our drive coming to an end. Approaching Wisby, the walls stood out with all their charm and singular influence. It was difficult as ever to realise that these were Northern latitudes, and we were carried in spirit to the land of the Moor. There uprose a vision of Tangiers, where, outside the walls, we had seen caravanseries; camels in every attitude and every stage of burden, patient, meek-looking creatures; stalwart, handsome Orientals, neither meek nor patient, with flashing eyes and long beards, wrapped in their abbas, wrangling and bargaining with each other. One almost expected to come upon the same thing here, but all was silent and abandoned, and the Eastern vision gave place to the colder realities of the North. The ground without the walls of Wisby was deserted and barren as a sandy plain; immediately within them, a portion of the unused territory was devoted to nothing more romantic than a rope-walk.

We were glad to return to the streets, evidences

of a dead world, signs of a living. Few shops tempted one; but a window displayed a pair of beautifully prepared, very small cow's horns, which became ours for a sum that seemed hardly able to repay the mere trouble of mounting. Near the harbour a shop displayed all kinds of objects made of the granite of the country, and specimens of marble marked with fossils. The good man brought from his hidden treasures two small painted panes, which he declared were already old in the last century. He had found them by chance in a remote cottage. We weakly yielded and the glass also became ours. But we doubted its antiquity, and wondered how many, in the course of years, had been persuaded to buy ancient panes from remote country cottages. Perhaps we were wrong; possibly they were genuine; and their late owner certainly looked honest.

That evening we went down to the breakwater, a solid piece of masonry made to resist immense seas. Outside, to break the force of the waves, it was supported by huge blocks of granite, simply thrown down and allowed to lie there. Altogether a wonderful work for the small place, which seems almost dead to enterprise and commerce.

We watched a sunset from the end of the stonework. Before us the wide sea stretched far as eye could reach. The sky grew red and angry with magnificent, wave-like clouds, that varied every moment with the growing twilight. Presently, deep red flashes and beams, splendid and beautiful, shot

upwards from the horizon: a display of the Northern Lights. Blood-red reflections, caught by the sea, were carried on by heaving rollers that followed each other with slow, majestic sweep; followed and died out without breaking, only to give place to others. There were no angry waves to-night. Silence was on the sea, and solitude. Not a vessel in sight, scarcely a craft in the small harbour.

Above rose the town, minarets, towers and ruins outlined against the deepening sky. A matchless picture. Other places have their palaces and churches, a thousand-and-one attractions; no other place has this wonderful assemblage of ruins, all within a stone's throw of each other, embraced within a narrow area, surrounded by ancient walls and towers keeping watch and ward over their priceless treasures.

Darkness gathered, but those Northern Lights still flashed in the silent, solemn sky. The moon, as if angry at the invasion of her realm, rose still and pale; a round, silvery shield, beautiful as a dream, cold as death, lighting up a sleeping world.

We left it all in sorrow. We had seen nothing grander and more startling, more magnificent and supernatural than this display of Northern Lights, in conjunction with the weird influence of the wonderful town. It was worthy of being a last impression of Wisby, and shall be the last recorded, though it was not our last day in the little capital of Gotland.

When the end came and we finally went down

to the coast, our factotum, who had sleepily admitted us that first morning, condescended to accompany us and carry our luggage. It cannot be said that we parted from him reluctantly. He was a man to be kept in good humour and, being avaricious, there was only one way to his heart. However, in going through the world one meets all sorts and conditions of men, and the tenth good man and true makes up for the nine unsatisfactory specimens that went before.

But we left Wisby without any sad reflections upon human nature; without any sad reflections of any sort, except regret for the end of our stay. It was altogether a different feeling from that with which we had seen Bornholm vanishing from sight. The one remains in the mind as an idyll, the other as a wonder. There we had left our heart, here our admiration. To both we should one day like to return. Each has its charms, privileges, and powers of attraction. Nothing, indeed, can give greater pleasure than to explore the shores of the Baltic and make friends with the islands reposing in its waters.

As Bornholm had faded from our vision, so Wisby fell away, its ruins, towers and minarets, its Northern influence, its Eastern glamour. The vessel steamed out of the small harbour on its way to Stockholm. Presently night fell and closed the scene.

CHAPTER XVIII

"GAMLE NORGE."

THERE came a day when we said a last good-bye to Stockholm and turned faces towards our beloved Norway. We felt almost as those who are going home.

The train left in the evening, and the railway company added nothing to the comfort of the night journey. The very suggestion of sleeping-cars irritated them. The plush-lined carriages were heavy and unyielding; compartments ran into each other, and one never felt safe from intrusion.

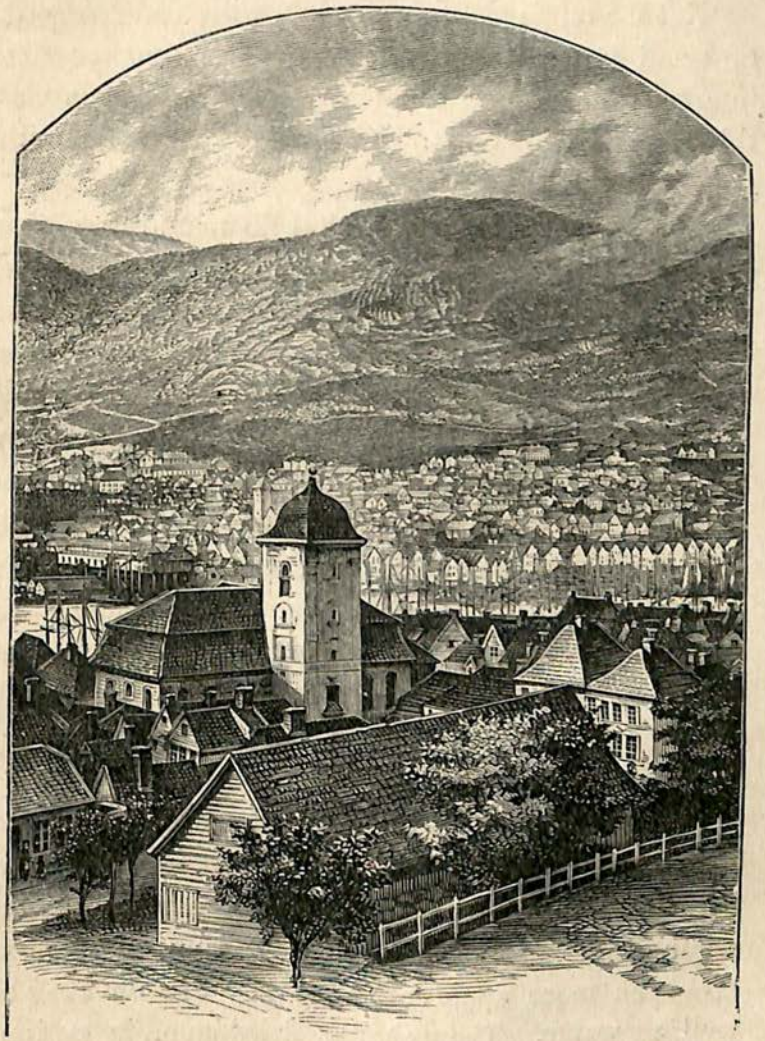
Nevertheless, "the day waiteth for the night." Morning broke and the sun rose. One began to revive. Buffets here and there were open; steaming coffee, of a quality found only in Norway, chased away the vapours of depression. "Away with melancholy while time is on the wing." It requires very little to do this sometimes. Many an unhappy mortal, weary of strife, would have remained to

bear the ills he knew of, had he only given himself one more half-hour of life: like the man Napoleon saved on the very brink of destruction, and turned all his bitter to sweet.

Presently a change came over the face of Nature. We breathed Norway air, and were happy. Mountains uprose, hills and valleys laughed and sang, rivers and torrents frothed and foamed. We had left the tame and commonplace, and passed into the majestic and stupendous. It was exhilarating as a draught of wine. Yet we all see and feel things from our own point of view, and these influences were less apparent to E., who was returning to work: close reading by day and more wasting of the midnight oil. But ere that hour sounded we had still many days of delight in the near future.

Christiania at last. One never returns to it without feeling that it is wonderfully favoured. When the old kings removed their capital from Bergen they did well.

Yet Bergen itself is hardly less favoured, and at a first glance is more picturesque. Hills rise about it with greater effect. Red-roofed houses stand out in vivid contrast with green slopes, arrest the eye and take captive all one's artistic fancy. The harbour running up into the town, under the hill shadows, is always full of life and animation. The quaint old castle, with whitewashed walls, looks on with grave silence; the silence and apathy of age; the melancholy of a dead-and-gone existence in the



BERGEN.

midst of a surrounding life that is ever fresh, young, and abundant.

Not far off is the fish market, with its multitude of small boats, its busy crowd. You see the fish jumping about their wells, angry and wondering at this close confinement. The boats are lively with green boughs.

The air is full of sounds that do not always give delight. Loud voices disputing about merits and prices; careful housewives to whom the difference of a fraction represents the object of existence. If you wish to see the market at its best you must break short your slumbers while the morning is yet early, and wend your way through the quiet streets. Many fishing-boats will already be moored to the quay, and you may stand on the bridge and watch others coming up from the sea. These, kept back by a last haul or a contrary wind, are a little late in the race. Yet they manage to make a day's work somehow, and earn a day's wage.

So much for Bergen.

The interest of Christiania is more diffused. Its beauties lie further afield. Here too, is a fish market—since we are on the topic—almost more picturesque than that of Bergen. The green boughs are even more apparent, and they are on land as well as water. They shelter fishwomen in curious dresses and long gold earrings. In Bergen all the sellers are men, commonplace and prosy in comparison with these Christiania fishwomen. The sun,

shining through the flickering leaves of the branches, casts laughing shadows upon the stalls, the fish, the hot pavement, and the bright-faced women. You decide that there is certainly no comparison between the attractions of this market and that of Bergen.

There is nothing very attractive in Christiania itself. All its beauty lies in its neigbourhood, its drives and water excursions. These are sufficient to satisfy the most exacting and insatiable lover of nature and variety. Oscarshall, a small summer retreat of the king, lies on the banks of the water like a white pearl in a rich green setting. Approaching the capital from the fjord, it stands out conspicuously above all other objects.

You walk or drive up to Frognersæter through lovely roads shaded by trees, and gradually growing more rustic and deserted. Once there, 1,400 feet above the level of the sea, you have before you one of the finest panoramas in the world.

Christiania lies sleeping in the sunshine, looking from this point a mere handful of houses. The noisy traffic of its streets is lost. Beyond, are the waters of lake and fjord, beautiful as a dream, calm as a mirror. Woods fringe their sides, islands are everywhere on their surface. The water divides into two wide channels. One of them leading to the sea, conducts you, sadly enough when your time comes, to the shores of Old England. If you could find it in your heart to be unpatriotic, you would exclaim

in the words of Ole Vig's "Normandssang"—a poet whose early death in 1857 was a grievous loss to Norway:

"Blandt alle Lande i Ost og Vest,
Er Fædrelandet mit Hjerte næst,
Det 'Gamle Norge,'
Med Klippeborge,
Mig huer bedst!"

From Frognersæter the surrounding country seems boundless as the sea. An immense plain stretches around, with occasional villages and hamlets, flowing streams and small lakes. One portion is dark with pine woods and might be called the Black Forest of Norway. But in Norway black forests multiply themselves, and cease to be remarkable.

The view closes with far-off mountains, chain beyond chain, mingling with cloudland, outlines lost in the skies. The snow mountains of Thelemarken can be traced—the Gausta-fjeld in the distance, its highest summit towering peak-like above all others, and seldom unveiled.

A little to the north are the mountains of Valders, that beautiful and romantic district of Norway, which remains in our memory as a vision. A dream of wonderful roads lying amidst hills and valleys, of innumerable small waterfalls enlivening the hill sides and helping to swell the rush and roar of river torrents.

A dream of pine forests, the smell of the fir

cones, the delicious lights and shadows of a sunny summer's day.

A dream of a race with time and a dark night's drive, through dense woods peopled with imaginary assassins: a glorious moon round as a shield that rose above woods and hills, and flooded our path with silvery light and ghostly shadows: an evening star, large as a small moon, that hung suspended in the dark blue ether, lovely as no star we had ever seen.

A dream—more dream-like than all—of a beautiful maiden who moved softly, whose voice was music and whose smile was heaven. Who took compassion upon us in the dead of night, and made us coffee, looking the while as romantic and ethereal as a Senta ready for Sacrifice. Then sent us on our way by a steadfast gaze from those pure eyes, when—who knows?—we might have counted the world well lost for their sake. Such things have been. And this dream was all a living reality. Eight years have passed since then, and many a visit to old Norway, but its impression is vivid as the events of yesterday.

We had again come to Christiania in this year of Grace 1885, but not to remain there. The capital was powerless to charm when the beauties of the country were ours to revel in. On this occasion the object of our desire was the Rjukenfos, one of the great waterfalls of Norway. It is a land of rushing mighty torrents; a land where dwells the sound of many waters. But of the greater falls we had not

yet seen the Rjuken, and decided to make the pilgrimage. Pilgrimages of old had a religious aim, and were supposed to touch the heart through penance. Ours was influenced through the beauties of Nature, the keenness of delight. The same end may be attained by different means. All roads lead to Rome.

We left Christiania early one morning. Our first day's stage would end at Kongsberg. The railway district is beautiful from first to last. Leaving the capital, you pass suburbs with large country houses reposing in brilliant gardens. In this quietude and sparkling air, these glowing skies, you feel that life passes as in a Paradise. Adams and Eves to-day are all invisible, gardens deserted, houses closed against the noon-tide heat. Here and there an open door, a cool-looking hall and another open door beyond, focus a glimpse of trees and flowering shrubs. But the train, slow-moving though it be, gives you a momentary flash of these Edens. To the left are the waters of the fjord, with steamers plying to and fro. Oscarshall stands out prominently above velvety slopes.

The train moves on into the interior amidst one of the fairest and most fertile spots of Norway, which, as a rule, delights in the wild and grand, rather than the soft and cultivated.

Now it passes through a narrow valley, musical with the sound of running waters ; now sweeps into a wide plain, where corn-fields wave, and cattle graze

CHRISTIANIA.

and ruminate, and farmsteads are conspicuous. Hills rise far and near. The stations are gorgeous with rich purple creepers, and their gardens would rival the rainbow. These station-masters are evidently above ordinary men, and delight in such refining influences as lie at their command. They cultivate the beautiful.

Onwards up the lovely valley of the Lier, through tunnels, skirting precipices looking into romantic depths. It would be worth while crossing the sea only to do this journey. The traveller would become acquainted with some of the finest Norwegian scenery, though perhaps not the most typical. Rugged hills, mountain plateaux, immense glaciers, rushing torrents, foaming waterfalls, endless pine forests—not these are seen in this district, but the opposite extreme; as if Norway delighted in proving that all Nature's possibilities are at her disposal.

We approached Drammen, which is so strikingly situated. The fjord spreads wide its surface. Long, picturesque bridges connect the town, which seems divided into three sections. To our right is an immense railway bridge, and by a sweeping curve, as bad as that which brings us round to Rochester in England, we are presently passing over it.

A very different scene, though, at Drammen. No old castle on the banks of a Medway to give romance and antiquity to the landscape. That is just the one thing Norway has not. Ruins are unknown throughout her length and breadth. She

has nothing more antiquated than those everlasting hills; and, having them, she can dispense with ruins. Snow peaks stretching into the clouds, range upon range of mountains; pine forests where trees are pillars and branches are the aisles and fretted vaults of Nature's cathedrals: with these she is independent of Gothic arches and crumbling walls.

"Det 'Gamle Norge,'
Med Klippeborge,
Mig huer bedst!"

The train rolled over the railway bridge upon the waters of Drammen. Beyond them was a plain bounded by hills. Upon the waters were barges laden with timber—the great trade of the neighbourhood. Most of it is destined for England and Holland.

Not long since, strolling down the harbour side, between Great Yarmouth and Gorleston, we came upon a huge pile of this timber, bearing the Drammen mark. A Norwegian barque at anchor, having discharged her cargo, was ready to depart again. We longed to board her and make friends with her crew: strong, fresh-looking Norwegians. But we had no language in common. It is said that a hundred years hence we shall so have advanced and developed as to be able to communicate thought one to another without speech. That time has not yet come, and we have to make the best of our limited capacities.

On the instant, this vessel and pile of timber

brought back all the old, well-loved, unfading picture. At once we were at Drammen in spirit, gazing upon the quiet waters of the fjord, with all their sky reflections. Timber-laden barges and vessels, large enough to brave the perils of the sea, moved to and fro. Distant hills encircled the wide plain with wave-like undulations cleaving the sky.

All this we saw to-day, not in spirit but in fact, as the train glided on to the station. It was a bustling little station for Norway; a junction with two or three platforms, and quite a complicated system of signals. The town is flourishing and given up to commerce. Innumerable saw-mills deliciously scented the air with pine wood and fir cones. Everywhere may be heard the swish of steel making its way through timber. The dust falls into deep pits below, but a good deal manages to scatter, and, like the fluff of a cotton-mill, finds out in time the weaker parts of those who spend their lives here.

On towards Kongsberg, where we were to stay the night. The character of the scenery changed: a narrowed prospect, hills more rugged and wild. We were in Thelemarken, still one of the most primitive districts in Norway. But this is only discovered in its remoter portions. The outskirts—such towns as Kongsberg—are as civilised as Christiania. Of the interior of Thelemarken beware. For the slightest imaginary offence the station people will turn upon you with rage. They are quite different from all other Norwegians; a separate race, with

remnants of barbarism. And you are at their mercy, for many parts of Thelemarken, difficult to traverse, are less frequented than the ordinary beaten tracts.

At last, Kongsberg, with its abrupt hills, steep precipices, rushing waters, and stretches of pine forest. The town has all the beauties of Nature for which Norway is famous. Standing upon the bridge, you have a wonderful assemblage of houses and church, hills and cliffs, a great plain beyond, and rushing waters at your feet; one splendid cataract after another. You may gaze upon the roaring falls and watch their course winding more quietly through the far-off valley. The banks are lined with saw-mills, factories and smelting works; and a little lower down is the entrance to the silver mines, from which the Government draws some portion of its revenues.

At the station we found the landlord of the Hôtel Victoria: an old acquaintance, for this was by no means our first visit to Kongsberg. He was still, as we had always found him, one of the most attentive hosts in Norway, and his house one of the best arranged in or out of Christiania. We were at once greeted with a pleasant surprise, in itself a welcome. The utmost resources of the hotel were from that moment at our disposal.

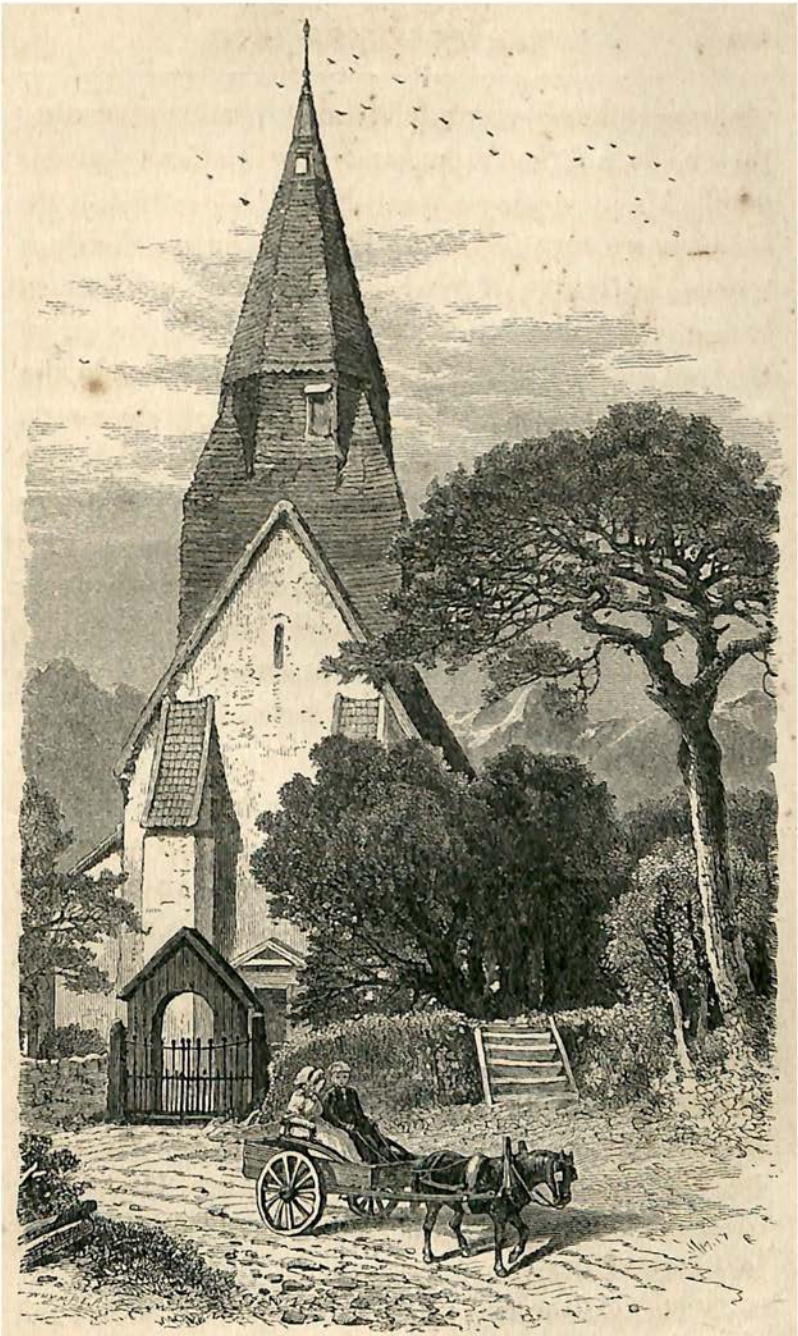
Our host had come to meet a Frenchman, who afterwards proved himself, if so strong an expression may be permitted, an unmitigated nuisance. He was perfectly irrepressible, with an amount of conceit

and self-satisfaction that nothing could approach. He followed in your footsteps and fastened himself upon you with the persistency of a Familiar. He never ceased talking for half a minute during the day, and we wondered if he went on talking in his sleep at night.

Perhaps the most objectionable thing about him was his voice. Pitched in shrill tones, it knew no softness or modulation, but wherever he happened to be, in a room or in the open air, it might at all times have been heard above the noise of rushing waters. Head and ears ached, nerves thrilled and vibrated; one felt that this must certainly end in suicide or murder. Finally, he was in the habit of doing the rudest things in the coollest manner, and begging your pardon in the politest possible way.

We knew him again in a moment. We had met him the previous year at Penmaenmawr; had spent part of an evening with him in the drawing-room of the hotel. His whole time and attention had then been given to two pretty girls, with whom he was carrying on a heavy flirtation after the manner of his class. Every other word had been praise of himself, and all his efforts were directed into drawing compliments from them. In this he did not succeed, whilst the girls, enjoying the opportunity, constantly mystified him, and occasionally paid him a compliment which might be taken in a very opposite sense.

"My dears," said the mother, after he had left the room, "you were rather hard upon the man.



IN QUIET WAYS.

He is ridiculously conceited; but you must remember that he is a Frenchman, and has the faults of his nation."

Here we mentally differed from the speaker, not without authority; for amongst the sons of France, land of our home and birth, we have found some of the best and worthiest of companions, most enduring of friendships. The Frenchman under discussion was not a true type of his nation.

"It was irresistible," laughed one of the pretty girls, in the most good-natured way possible; "for though he spoke English so well, he never once saw that we were making fun of him."

He had left early the next morning, and here, in this narrow world, we had met again in Kongsberg. He was good enough to inform us that our face haunted and puzzled him, and we allowed it to do so without bringing back North Wales to his memory. On leaving Norway, he informed us five hundred times over that he was going off to scale the great wall of China, and we were malicious enough to devoutly hope he would fall into the hands of Philistines who might bring him to what little senses he possessed. Human nature at best is revengeful. The Canaanite is still in the land; the old Adam is not dead in any of us.

At Kongsberg we had done with the railway. The rest of our journey would be accomplished by carriole, with the exception of the passage down the Tinesjö, in the little steamer. The excursion would

take three days, and at Kongsberg it was necessary to hire carrioles for Tinoset, on the borders of the lake, a drive of ten hours from Kongsberg. At Tinoset they would await our return on the third day.

The landlord of the Victoria Hotel arranged everything very comfortably. Luckily a carriole will only hold one person, or the Frenchman, also bound for the Rjukenfos, would have fastened himself upon us. As it was, he proved a great hindrance on the road; until getting down to examine the construction of a bridge, we finally outstripped him and kept ahead of him as far as Bolkesjö, where one stopped for lunch and to rest the horses.

It was necessary to leave Kongsberg very early in the morning in order to catch the steamer from Tinoset, and we were on the road whilst the day was yet grey. Alas! it was very grey; and at times showers came down with a force that staggered the little horses, and almost overturned our carrioles. But we had a capital skydsgut. The man was altogether an exception to his class, and drove so fast that we reached Tinoset a full hour before the usual time.

There are several ways of reaching Tinoset. By Bolkesjö is the nearest and most picturesque. By Hitterdal you pass through much that is wild and rugged in Thelemarken, including one of the oldest wooden churches and greatest curiosities in Norway. This we had already seen on previous occasions, and to-day chose the road viâ Bolkesjö.

The Frenchman comfortably settled that we

should all return viâ Hitterdal. He had not seen the church and district. We had, but the privilege of accompanying him was sufficient to repay us for the extra two hours' journey. We said nothing, but perhaps thought and planned the more.

So we started in the grey morning. Under ordinary circumstances, with blue sky and sunshine, it would have been a very delightful drive. Even in spite of clouds and occasional showers that seemed the beginning of another deluge, it was more than pleasant. The little horses were strong and willing, and thought nothing of the ten hours' work before them. E. and I had one skydsgut between us. The only drawback to these carrioles is that the skydsgut in his seat behind is a little closer to you than you care for. This cannot be avoided.

My carriole was honoured by the skydsgut, or post-boy; E. carried the food for the horses, enough to last them for the next forty-eight hours. It was a large sackful, not dignified, but who thinks of dignity in Norway? Who thinks of anything but a free life and intense enjoyment?

It was a mystery how the mountain of sack was tied to the carriole. Every now and then the post-boy would stop the horse with his peculiar Norwegian sound; and there is an understanding between all the little horses in Norway, that when the leader stops all the others must stop also. On looking back whenever we halted, we found the mountain of sack had loosened and fallen away. The

vigilant skydsgut seemed to know by instinct when this would happen, as if the bag had been fastened for a certain number of minutes or hours; like the winding up of a watch, which is bound to run down at a given moment.

The drive was a long one, with only one stage on the way: Bolkesjö. The road lay amidst mountains near and far off; chains of hills in every direction. There were great plains about us, and a running river, and frequent forests. Here and there we passed a farm-house, surrounded by a cherry orchard, but these were few and far between. As a rule, for mile after mile no house or tenement was to be seen. The few we noticed were houses peculiar to Thelemarken—old and picturesque; storehouses dark with time, and slanting, overhanging roofs, sheltered under the hill sides.

We passed through dense forests and climbed steep hills, which the horses took bravely. In the intervals of sunshine, the rain-drops on the trees sparkled like diamonds, shadows fell athwart our path, the scent of the pines came out, and the air blew fresh and invigorating.

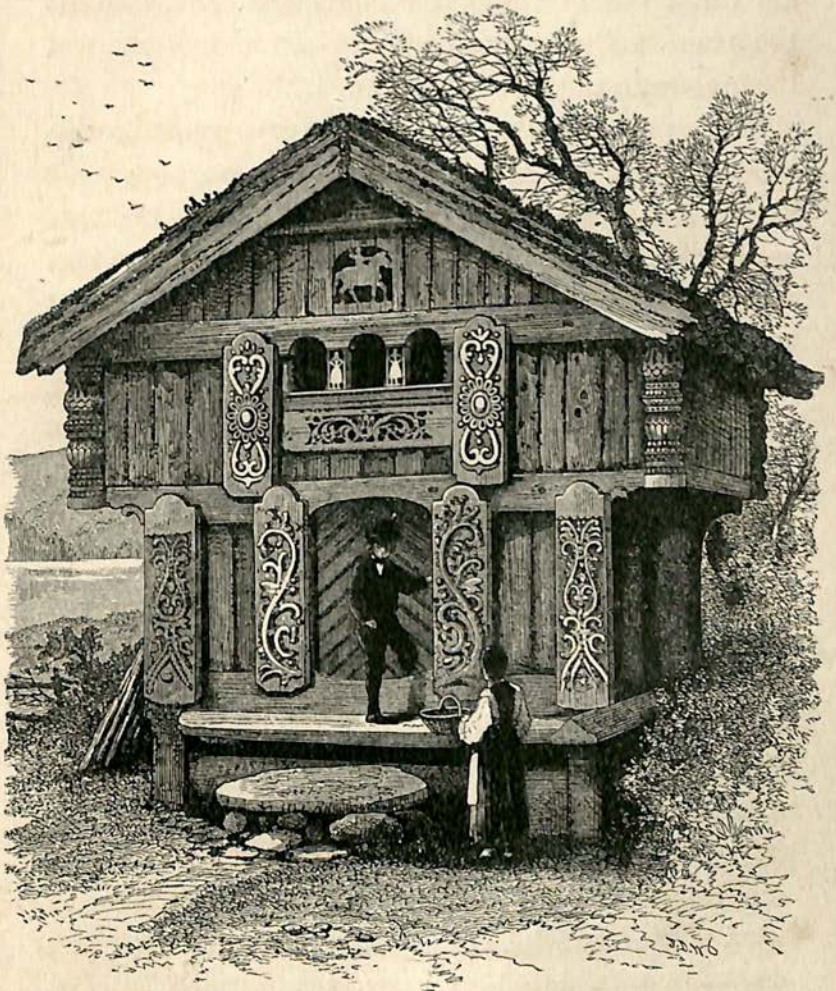
So well did our post-boy urge on the horses that we reached Bolkesjö long before the appointed time, yet they were as fresh and frisky as when we had left Kongsberg. At Bolkesjö we were supposed to halt two hours. There was every inducement to do so. The inn or station was quite civilised, and we had it to ourselves.

The food was not good, and the station people themselves were not very obliging, and seemed to do everything for everyone under protest. This is sometimes the case in Norway when food has to be served to travellers out of regular hours.

On a lawn near the inn some girls were playing croquet. They were staying in a small house close by, which the station people had built and let for the season. It was a very pretty place under the brow of the hill, reposing in perfect solitude, overshadowed by the pine trees.

But the great charm of Bolkesjö is its view, justly considered one of the finest in Europe. From the station you look down upon one of the most wonderful valleys in the world. Here you are about 1,300 feet above the level of the sea, and gazing into the valley is almost like gazing into another world. Every description of scenery is here, from the wild and majestic to the soft and sleeping. Two lakes here repose, one much below the level of the other. The mountains of Thelemarken, some of the wildest in Norway, are everywhere visible, surrounding the plain. In the very centre is Gausta, towering like a pyramid above all others. Chains divide, as if to let you out into the world, and you feel that probably their valleys and passes are enlivened by rushing waters. You long to set off and explore, and nothing is easier if your line of route falls that way. Ours did not.

Few views in Norway surpass this, perhaps equal



IN THELEMARKEN.

it. During part of our stay the sun was good enough to come out, and the clouds flying across the sky threw shadows upon the landscape. They swept the plain, rolled over the mountain sides, and lost themselves in the world beyond.

When our time was up and everyone had sufficiently rested, we started again on our journey. The Frenchman once more contrived to take the lead, and we gave him five minutes' start. We saw him far away down the long winding road and thought we had placed leagues between us. Not at all.

Just outside Bolkesjö, we came to a quaint old Thelemarken house. Skydsgut intimated that it was worth inspecting. The owner, substantial and smiling, stood in his doorway and seemed to second the proposition. We went in, and the old man bid us welcome in true hospitable fashion. The postboy informed us afterwards that he was quite rich, and allowed his little house to be seen out of pure philanthropy. Its old-fashioned furniture, old plates and corner cupboards old windows, and ancient owner, would have delighted an artist and made a splendid picture. The old man was delighted at our admiration, and we were giving a parting ecstasy, when a shrill voice made itself heard in the doorway, and a shadow turned light to darkness. "Ah ha!" it shrieked; "I thought there was something to be seen. I saw you get down, and turned back."

But our inspection was over and his had only begun. So we mounted, took the lead and kept it

for ever after. We had been at Tinoset quite three-quarters of an hour when the Frenchman came carrioling up the road, the picture of anything but amiability. "I never caught you up," he shouted, as soon as he saw us on the upper balcony, where we were taking coffee. "I could not get my horse to go. How did you manage?"

We had reached Tinoset long before our time. The station was close to the lake, and the small boat at the landing-stage was getting up steam. It was supposed to start at six o'clock. The inn was full of people; every room seemed crowded. It is unreasonable to resent such a state of things, as if it were a personal injury, and yet one invariably does so. Certainly here and this evening it was especially uncomfortable.

As the day went on, the weather had not improved. Clouds had lowered and rain was more frequent. An icy wind blew off the lake. We shivered at the prospect before us—two hours and more on a boat without a cabin, with only an awning overhead, wind and rain beating down fiercely between the mountains, no protection but thin mackintoshes already wet through. It was not a cheerful look out. This was seeking pleasure under difficulties.

It took a great deal of coffee this time to chase away the vapours of depression, but they yielded at last. Bright ideas began to flow.

We laid siege to the womenkind of the station,

and bribed them to lend us plaids. One of them brought her best Sunday shawl wrapped up in thin paper and lavender. She took it out, looked at it affectionately, and finally handed it to us with a sigh and a smile.

"Do you think you will spoil it?" she said, looking at the skies that just then were weeping again.

We promised to restore its value fourfold if we did so. It was a true act of generosity and heroism. Of faith also in human nature, for we departed and were not compelled to return that way.

Nor did she do it in the hope of gain; for when we did return, she took back her plaid and ran off laughing without waiting for any reward for her goodness. But we caught her up and paid our debt, though the obligation was not to be cancelled.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RJUKENFOS.

THE boat started at last with a small crowd on board. But for our borrowed plumes —or plaids—we should probably have died of cold: indirectly, if not at once. The lake is long and narrow. Mountains rise abruptly on either side. Rain beat down upon our awning, and the wind found out the weak joints in our armour. It was impossible to pretend to enjoy the journey, or to raise ecstasies at deep waters and frowning hills. We only longed for the end.

Our destination was Strand, at the other end of the lake. We devoutly hoped it was a large station, with plenty of house room and an abundant larder. This crowd on board was only a portion of what we should have to encounter.

The shades of evening deepened, and with chattering teeth but thankful hearts we landed at Strand. It was evidently a lovely spot, but we had no place for raptures to-night; they would keep till morning.

There was the usual Norwegian stampede. Everyone rushed and scrambled and tried to be first at the inn. It was only a few yards from the landing-stage. We took things more leisurely, and, on reaching the house, quietly went upstairs.

Down below, the Babel was unearthly. Everyone talked at once, and everyone wanted the very same thing at the very same moment. To do most of them justice, they did not care how they were lodged for the night; any number in the smallest amount of space. We knew our danger in this respect, came across a handmaiden and despatched her for the landlady. Up she came, breathless and bewildered, but so obliging that in two minutes she was ready to perform sacrifices for us.

We had found out a capital room with three beds in it. Possession is nine points of the law, and we offered to pay for the third bed provided it was not occupied. "I am driven to my wit's end," said the landlady, "but if you want the room you shall have it, and I should not think of charging you for the empty bed. The others must manage how they can; they send me wild with their noise and impatience."

At this time up came the Frenchman, noisiest of all. He looked round. "Three beds," said he. "The very thing. This will do," to the landlady. "I have not the slightest objection to sharing your room," he added, turning to us.

Endurance has its limits. We quietly assured him that on our part we had an objection, and that

our room was not to be shared by anyone. He was silent from sheer astonishment. We profited by the occasion, locked the door and went off with the key. We found, before long, that the landlord had a second house a hundred yards off, with any number of beds, every one of them unoccupied. This crowding into rooms was nothing but the favourite Norwegian system of cramming people together. To the empty house the Frenchman betook himself later on, and he had by far the best of it. He was free of the whole place and, if it pleased him, could make night hideous with noises without disturbing the world.

Dinner—or supper—that night was a Barmecide's feast. Every one was locked out of the dining-room to begin with. The adjoining room was small and crowded. One could hardly move or breathe, whilst the Babel never ceased. We wandered round by a mysterious passage and came across the landlady, who smuggled us into the empty dining-room. Here we had comparative rest and repose, though the outside roar came through the doorway, and impatient hands kept knocking to know when supper would be ready. Not the slightest attention was paid to these anxious inquirers by the bustling hostess and her handmaidens.

But presently a Philistine found out the back way to the dining-room, entered, glared at us, unlocked the door, and the crowd rushed in pêle-mêle. In bounced the hostess, frantic and furious. "If you

don't every one of you go out," she cried, "not an atom of supper shall you see to-night. Do you think that I am going to be defied like this in my own house? Away with you, every one!"

"Then why do you let in the Englishmen?" cried the discontented author of the mischief, pointing to us, who were deep in our books.

"Be so good as to let the Englishmen alone," retorted our delightful hostess. "I am mistress of this place, and if I choose to have them here, what is that to you? They are not in my way and they are out of yours. And now, away with you!"

Upon this there was a general exit. The door was once more locked, and to make assurance doubly sure, the key was taken out. Our hostess, all smiles, turned to us. "Pay no attention to them," she said, "and my rage is all put on; but if I didn't treat them all in this way—half of them are nothing but noisy students—I should never see the end of my work."

There was peace again for half an hour. Then the floodgates were opened and the tide flowed in. Alas! it was almost all that did flow in, very weak tea excepted. The dishes were nothing but grilled bones, and what there was the noisy students above referred to seized upon without ceremony. We made out as well as we could with dry bread, but even of this there was a scarcity. It is no mere figure of speech to say that we both left the table more hungry than we had sat down.

About ten o'clock the landlord lighted a lantern and escorted the Frenchman to the "dependence." In largeness of heart and happiness of deliverance, we accompanied him. For once he was rather silent. He felt that he had been circumvented and denied his own way.

Behold us, a procession of four, Diogenes leading with his lantern, which cast a faint glimmer in all the surrounding darkness. That darkness was almost appalling. Hills were about us on all sides, great black masses, cold and ponderous. The waters of the lake on our left were equally dark, silent and mysterious: equally cold. Our little night walk filled us with a weird and creepy sensation. We felt very far out of the world; were so to all intents and purposes; had visions of a comfortable inn in Christiania and a well-spread table, where hunger and thirst were unknown. But at last we got rid of our Familiar.

We reached the "dependence." It swallowed him up and we saw him no more that night. But we heard him. There was the glimmer of a candle in his room. He threw wide the window and the light behind him cast a long-drawn-out Mephistophelian shadow upon the hill side. And he screamed out with shrill laughter:

"Malbrouke s'en va-t-en guerre!"

To which he put an impromptu refrain which sounded like "Vogue la galère!" And he beat a frenzied dance upon the boards: a perfect sailors'

hornpipe or devils' tattoo. It might have been delirium produced by weak tea upon nerves insufficiently supported, but we put it down to rage, not excitement.

Next morning rose bright and glorious. Clouds, mists, and cold winds had departed. We were in the midst of summer and paradise. Not exactly a Garden of Eden, full of flowering shrubs and rich luxuriance, but everything that was grand, wild and sublime. It is difficult not to multiply adjectives when speaking of these charmed spots of earth.

We were on the borders of the lake. Mountains towered on all sides, rising precipitously out of the water. Mountains for the most part gloomy and sombre, though lighted this morning into warmth and laughter by the sunshine. Many of them were clothed with dark pine forests.

Here and there portions had been cleared and cultivated, and small farms had established themselves. High up, one saw small cattle grazing, and still higher, probably, there were mountain saeters. A boat moored on the borders of the lake was the only means of communication with the outer world. Haymakers on the slopes, three or four of them just in one spot, were raking and gathering. What an ideal existence, if existence it can be called. Who would not renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world for such Arcadian bowers, where the shadows cast by the sun alone mark the

passing hours, and the seasons are known by their fruits?

We were on the very edge of the lake. The waters were calm and sparkling. On the farther shore the hills threw vivid reflections into their depths. The little steamer was at the landing-stage, preparing to depart. A repast was being held at the inn, another Barmecide's feast. All yesterday's visitors to the Rjukenfos were going through the imaginary process of breaking their fast. The noisy element abounded, and was a reality. These were all returning to the world, as we should return to-morrow.

The space at the back of the inn was full of carrioles and stolkjaers, and small, country-made, clumsy barouches. Each had its driver, and there was a Babel, a cracking of whips, and a general scene of excitement and expectation, that was rather exhilarating than otherwise. We secured our particular fancy in the way of conveyance, and felt comfortable in our minds. We dwelt in a fools' paradise.

We had gone for a little walk down the lake side to digest our imaginary breakfast, and when we returned, most of the visitors and vehicles had started on their way. Ours was in readiness, and we sank below freezing-point as we saw the irrepressible Frenchman seated on the box by the driver. We felt that we were in for it. There was no escape.

"There were hardly enough carriages for all," he

shouted. "I knew you would be too pleased to give me a seat."

What a glorious drive it was! There are few drives to equal it in all Norway. It would take between two and three hours to reach Brue, the ascent leading to the waterfall. We started up the valley, which gradually narrowed. The magnificent region of the Gausta-fjeld surrounded us, rising 6,000 feet. The highest peak confronted us for a great portion of the way; the point we had seen from Frognersæter towering like a pyramid into the sky. Great hills rose on the right, many of them with sloping, cultivated banks. Our road lay at their foot. There was room in many parts for hamlets and settlements, that were all bright and flourishing. It was altogether a very sparkling scene.

On our left was the river. Its force increased as the valley narrowed, and, gradually ascending, we looked into far-off romantic depths where rushed and roared the torrent; precipitous sides broken and rugged and overgrown with moss and lichen and drooping shrubs. The gigantic mountains frowned above us in all their majesty.

In one part, where the valley was still wide and the stream had lost its intensity, the water was spanned by a rustic bridge. A mill had settled down on a number of small islands round which the river swirled. Men were busily at work, loose timbers were thrown about. Mingling with the noise of the water came the sound and laughter and song of the

men at their labour. And they worked with a will. No idleness here, and no want and poverty, though possibly no wealth. It was their lot and their inheritance, in every sense of the word, to work until the evening, and to rest from their labours only when the strong hands are folded once for all.

Narrower grew the valley, more wild and rugged and beautiful; deeper the precipice, lower the river, more rushing the frothing, seething torrent. We crossed a small bridge and reached the end of our drive, not of our pilgrimage.

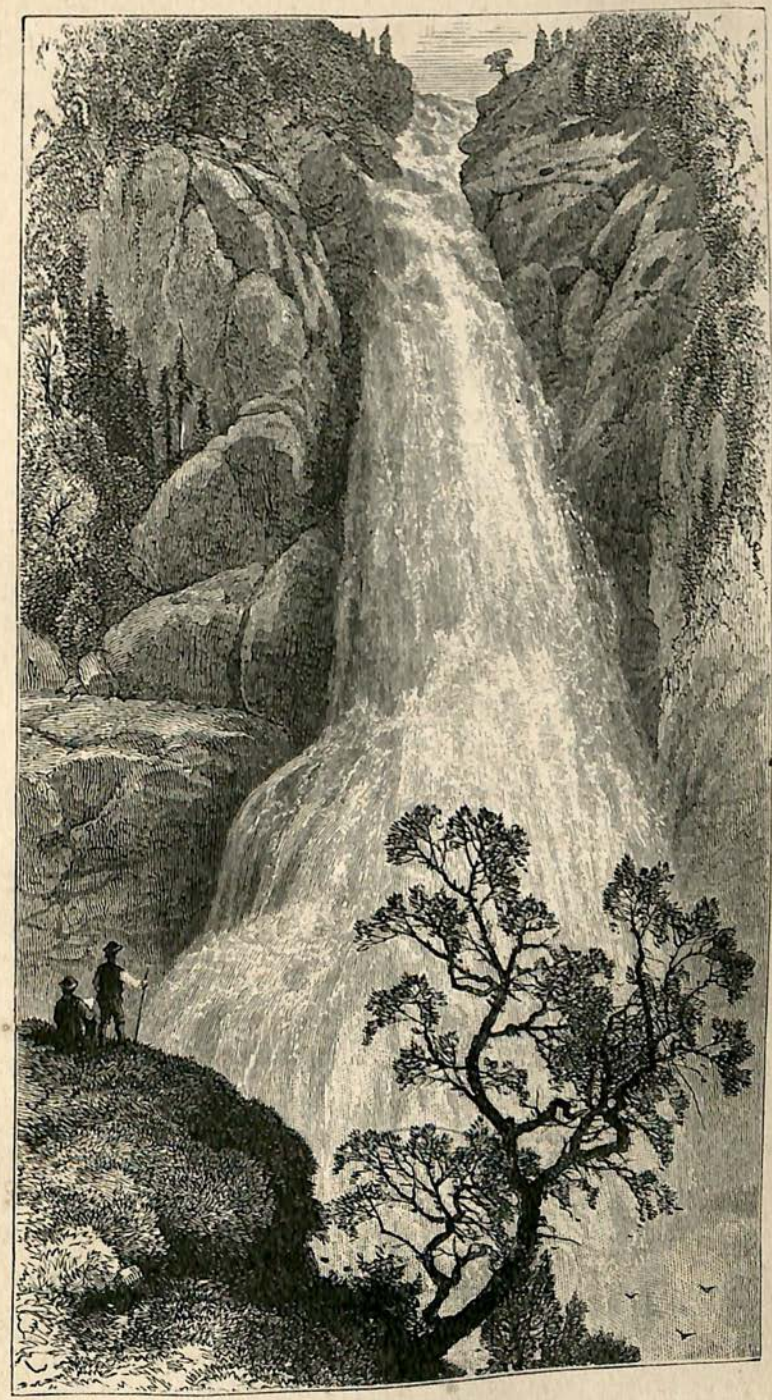
We now had to ascend a rugged mountain path for about half an hour, which twisted and twirled and wound about, under the hill shadows. It was a wonderfully romantic walk. We seemed to be approaching a spot where the valley met and closed in; a mountain pass beyond which no traveller must venture. It was not quite that, though impossible to get back into the world by any other road without encountering great hardships and certain dangers. No pleasure is worth a decided risk, and to throw away a chance of life is not for those who walk in wisdom's ways.

At last, where the mountains almost embraced, we came to an inn. An inn far out of the world and far above it, yet containing every reasonable accommodation, even to a table-d'hôte. This was a very commonplace announcement in the midst of such romantic scenery. It was exceedingly welcome, nevertheless, after our feasts of imagination at Strand.

Even here we could not see the waterfall, though it might be distinctly heard. It was as a sound of many waters, of rushing mighty waters. A narrow pathway from the house on the mountain side, a turn to the left, and suddenly the waterfall in all its magnificence opened up. It was indeed overwhelming. An immense circle of rock, a great amphitheatre of stone; its extent so vast that a bird flying across the space seemed lost for ever. A torrent of water, foaming, seething, falling with terrific impetuosity a distance of over eight hundred feet. Falling with such force that the spray ascended in clouds, and the end of the fall and the bottom of this great cauldron of stone were never visible.

The roar was deafening. The scene was stupendous in its majesty and grandeur. We were on a level with the top of the fall, and this was our only regret. To get to the bottom and gaze upwards was impossible. About half-way down was the most we could accomplish. Great ledges of rock, like platforms, stood out at different points and distances, and on these we stood, thinking each view finer and more splendid than the last. We gazed into unseen depths with a shudder. The very birds flying across the abyss gave one an uncomfortable thrill. A horrible feeling of the necessity of attempting to do likewise took possession of us. To hear a word spoken without shouting into each other's ears was impossible.

A mighty mass of water ever falling, falling, falling, white and foaming. And ever ascending was the



IN THE NÆRODAL.

drifting spray, that spread and dispersed like a cloud in the air. The mountains almost closed in, great perpendicular walls of rock. The only passage for the waters was a narrow gully, twisting about like a snake. The water rushed and dashed, boiling and frothing over stones and boulders in its headlong journey to the far-off lake. We had followed its course upwards this morning; traced it backwards as it were, from the calmness of age, where it fell into the Tinsjö above Strand, to its hurrying, impetuous, passionate youth in this mountain pass.

We seemed to be at the end of the world, and for most people there is no going beyond. The road leading into the ruder districts of Thelemarken is a small path or ledge at the side of this precipice of wall: a few inches of rock for the feet and an inch or so of rock for the hands to hold. This you have to scale for many yards, your body literally suspended over the yawning chasm. One false step, a failure of the nerves, a slip of the grasp, and all would be over. So it used to be, and so we were told it still is. We did not attempt it.

This pathway is called the Marie Stige. Tradition has it that a certain beautiful and faithful Mary used to brave this pathway to meet her lover in secret. The course of true love never runs smooth, nad the obstacle in this instance was a relentless father. The father died, and Mary went for the last time to meet her lover, with the news that they were free to marry. She cried out for joy on seeing

him, and he, hastening towards her on the wings of love, missed his footing and fell into the abyss. Of course Mary went out of her mind, and wandered about for ever after, a pale, melancholy phantom. No doubt her spirit may still be seen on moonlight nights, hovering above the rushing waters.

We had come for the fall and spent all our spare time gazing upon the unrivalled picture. On the whole, we thought it the most remarkable of all the great falls. The body of water of the Vöringfos was greater, but this fall was more beautiful and majestic, its surroundings were more romantic, its effect was more thrilling. On the other hand, the Skjæggedalsfos was more ethereal and graceful, but the torrent of water was smaller, the amphitheatre of rocks far less grand, the approach to it less imposing.

Here you came suddenly, in an instant of time, upon the full blaze and burst of the whole scene, from its most striking and startling standpoint. At the first gaze, the mind, bewildered, refuses to take in such an overwhelming assemblage of rock and falling water, such an immense circular abyss; for this great chasm, into which the torrent for ever rushes and roars, is the most remarkable feature in a scene where every detail is on a grand and stupendous scale.

But we had to leave it presently for a prosier occupation. E., dreamy and romantic though he was, had no intention of missing the mid-day meal. We had scarcely broken our fast in the early morning; and if, as Mrs. Glass said to Jeanie Deans, "There is ill

talking between a full body and a fasting," the evil is only increased where the fasting is on both sides.

So we departed, and found quite a sumptuous repast; far more than one could have expected in this remote mountain pass, 2,000 feet above the level of the sea. Strand was altogether eclipsed; we should have said redeemed, but we remembered that we had still an evening and a morning meal to make out in the little inn overshadowing the lake.

And presently the time came to return. We went down the path, winding amidst the mountains. Far below yawned the bed of the pass, through which the water rushed and raved. At the appointed place we found our conveyance in waiting, and the various drivers in a state of excitement. Whilst we had been revelling above in the wonders of Nature, a small tragedy was going on down here. One of the little horses had been suddenly seized with a mysterious illness, and died. There was mourning and lamenting amidst the drivers, who are fond of their little animals. Another had been found to take its place. These gaps are quickly filled up, not only in the world of quadrupeds. "One morn I missed him at the accustomed hill." It is a short record, and the world rolls on as before. What says Tasso?—

> "So passes as a passing day
> The flowering youth of man,
> Nor April's mild returning ray
> May bid him bloom again."

We returned through all the splendid Oestfjord valley, only the lovelier for being better known. Back between these magnificent mountain ranges; beside waters that gradually grew broader and calmer as the valley expanded.

So it came to pass that we once more found ourselves safe and sound at Strand. The obliging hostess was our friend as ever. In some mysterious way we had won her heart and goodwill, and her "good man" was quite as ready to be civil. It is true they could not make bricks without straw; and it's ill going to a scanty larder to feed a multitude; but we made a merit of necessity, and took the will for the deed. We can all be very virtuous when there is no alternative before us. As an old friend is wont to say when finishing a sumptuous repast with a crust of bread: "My wants are few and they are easily satisfied." There is a Pecksniffian ring about the voice, but the twinkle in the eye contradicts the hypocrisy of the sentiment. Mr. Pecksniff's eyes never twinkled.

The next morning we left Strand with a heavy heart. Far rather would we have gone back again up that matchless valley to the Rjukenfos. One day devoted to these glories was as unsatisfactory as the glimpse of Paradise must have been to the Peri without its gates.

Not that Strand was all Paradise to us. The Barmecide feasts were trying; the noise and the scramble we did our best to keep out of also affected

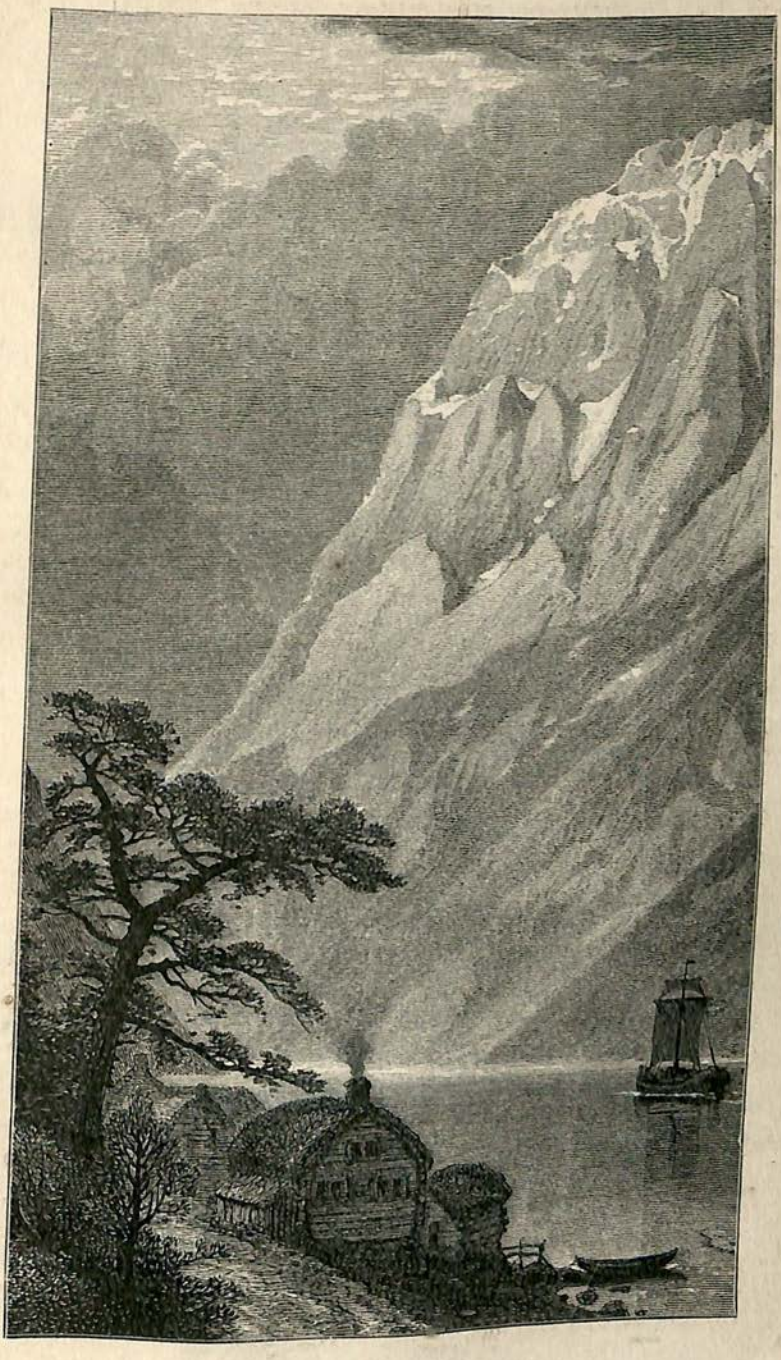
one's serenity. On these occasions the ordinary rules of politeness are too often forgotten. It is everyone for himself; "sauve qui peut." Those who have scruples, and cannot so easily adopt the rule, come off far down in the race; unless, like ourselves in this instance, they fall in with a discriminating hostess, who takes them under her ample wing.

The weather had changed again: the skies wept for our departure. But it was morning instead of night, and more tolerable. Nevertheless we looked forward with a certain amount of misgiving to the ordeal before us if the rain continued. That ten hours' drive from Tinoset to Kongsberg was no light undertaking; and by way of Hitterdal—the Frenchman's proposed route—it would be twelve or thirteen hours.

The small steamer started with her living freight. We all knew each other by this time, at any rate by sight. There was a more kindly spirit abroad. They realised that though "the Englishmen" had been admitted to the sanctum of the dining-room, all had shared alike in the feast of dishes. In fact the Englishmen had come off decidedly second best.

A great many of them were country schoolmasters and mistresses—a small excursion from different parts of Norway. There was just the difference amongst them that Nature delights in, who does not make her sons and daughters after one pattern.

They were all homely; some were rough; edu-



IN THE NÆROFJORD.

cated, but not polished; no doubt most were kindly at heart; and a few in themselves were very nice. One face haunts me still above all others. A tall, well-made man of about twenty-five, with dreamy, melancholy eyes, and an expression which seemed to say that the race for life was a little too much for him. He was one of the exceptions who spoke softly and moved quietly, and never put himself forward. He knew a good deal of English and French, and conversed well in both.

The lake was gloomy, but the passage down was interesting. It did not always rain, and we were tolerably sheltered. The lake is about thirty miles long, and not more than three miles broad at its widest. The mountains were desolate, but there is a grandeur in all mountains. Here and there the slopes had been cultivated into small farms, but they were few and far between. Silence and solitude reigned for the most part. Our little boat ruffled the smooth surface of the lake and left a long wave behind her.

Tinoset at last, and the crowded station: more crowded and scrambling than any station we ever entered in Norway. It was badly situated, too; smothered by the hill side, and, in such weather, damp, dark and gloomy. There was no order or regularity in the place. The women folk rushed about distracted, each head and pair of hands having enough work for a dozen. Everyone was given everyone else's order, but as nine out of ten asked for coffee, it did not much matter.

After much trouble we found our maidens whose hearts had been moved into lending us their shawls They were neither looking for us nor their property If we caught sight of them at the end of a passage, before we could get up to them they were at the other ends of the earth. Finally we captured them and resigned our charges. Soon after, we departed. Somehow or other we had missed the Frenchman. In spite of the weather he kept to his Hitterdal programme. We had never intended to take it, but returned as we had come, by way of Bolkesjö. Nothing could be finer than its scenery, and we were well acquainted with Hitterdal.

But the finest scenery would be lost upon one to-day. Clouds gathered, rain came down with a vengeance, roads were sloughs of despond. We went on and on, up and down steep hills, falling into ruts and falling out of them; passing through forests, under trees that wept. We almost wept ourselves. Under sunshine and blue skies this drive would have yielded nothing but delight.

At Bolkesjö there was another small crowd, where we had expected solitude. We were just in time for dinner, and sat down at least twenty to table. It was humble fare, but sufficient. All the splendid view was veiled, the mountains were lost in cloud.

We stayed about an hour and a half, and then pushed on. The weather grew worse, and, approaching the mountains in the neighbourhood of Kongsberg, lightning flashed and thunder rolled and

echoed with awful magnificence. The skies were lurid, an effect almost appalling in its splendour. The lightning scarcely ceased, one terrific peal of thunder died out only to give place to another. Such rain had never been seen. It came down like waterspouts. This lasted for a whole hour, when clouds and storm cleared, and we entered Kongsberg in comparative calm.

We had been comfortably settled: had dined, were feeling at peace with all the world, had been sheltered at the hotel for considerably over two hours: when our irrepressible Frenchman drove into the yard. His astonishment at seeing us was worth witnessing.

"I thought you were behind me," he cried, when speech came to him. "I could not make it out, and believed something had happened to you on the road."

"And you never turned back to see?"

"Ah!" with a shrug of the shoulders. "Avec un temps comme ça, que voulez-vous?"

But he was of those who would not have turned back in the sunniest weather.

He certainly looked an object of misery. The homely simile of a drowned rat exactly expressed his condition. Two hours ago probably ours had not been much better, but that was all in the past. But he was very much put out at our having stolen a march upon him, and did not easily forgive us. This affected neither our happiness nor our repose.

If anything, indeed, haunted those slumbers, it was the roar of mighty cataracts; the vision of a grand waterfall; of yawning chasms, amphitheatres of rock no hand of man could have raised; of rushing torrents and rapid rivers; the sound of many waters, never silent in this beautiful Land of the North.

And when we left Kongsberg the next morning, the sound still rang in our ears, and the influence followed us.

CHAPTER XX.

IN SOUND OF MANY WATERS.

THUS we see that Norway, above all other countries, is the land of waterfalls. America has its Niagara; Switzerland its Schaffhausen; Germany its Gastein; but the waterfalls of Norway are legion. The land seems to have been made for rushing torrents and mountain streams. Down it runs a range of mountains one thousand miles long, sometimes rising nine thousand feet above the level of the sea. Here rivers have their birth and ice-fields their home. Some of these ice-fields will cover an area of five hundred square miles; and those whose area is no more than one hundred or one hundred and fifty square miles or so must not esteem themselves greater than they are.

The shores of Norway correspond with the wild grandeur of its interior. They are rugged, broken, ironbound beyond all other shores; beautiful as a dream; full of change and variety. The sea runs up

into the land in channels which forms the fjords. They are of all lengths, of all descriptions; now overpowering by their wild, savage, gloomy grandeur; now soothing with luxuriant vegetation, with pine forests, with fields and valleys and farmsteads; with delicious solitudes full of repose, full of a divine essence and influence never to be interpreted by words, but filling the soul with a nameless rapture.

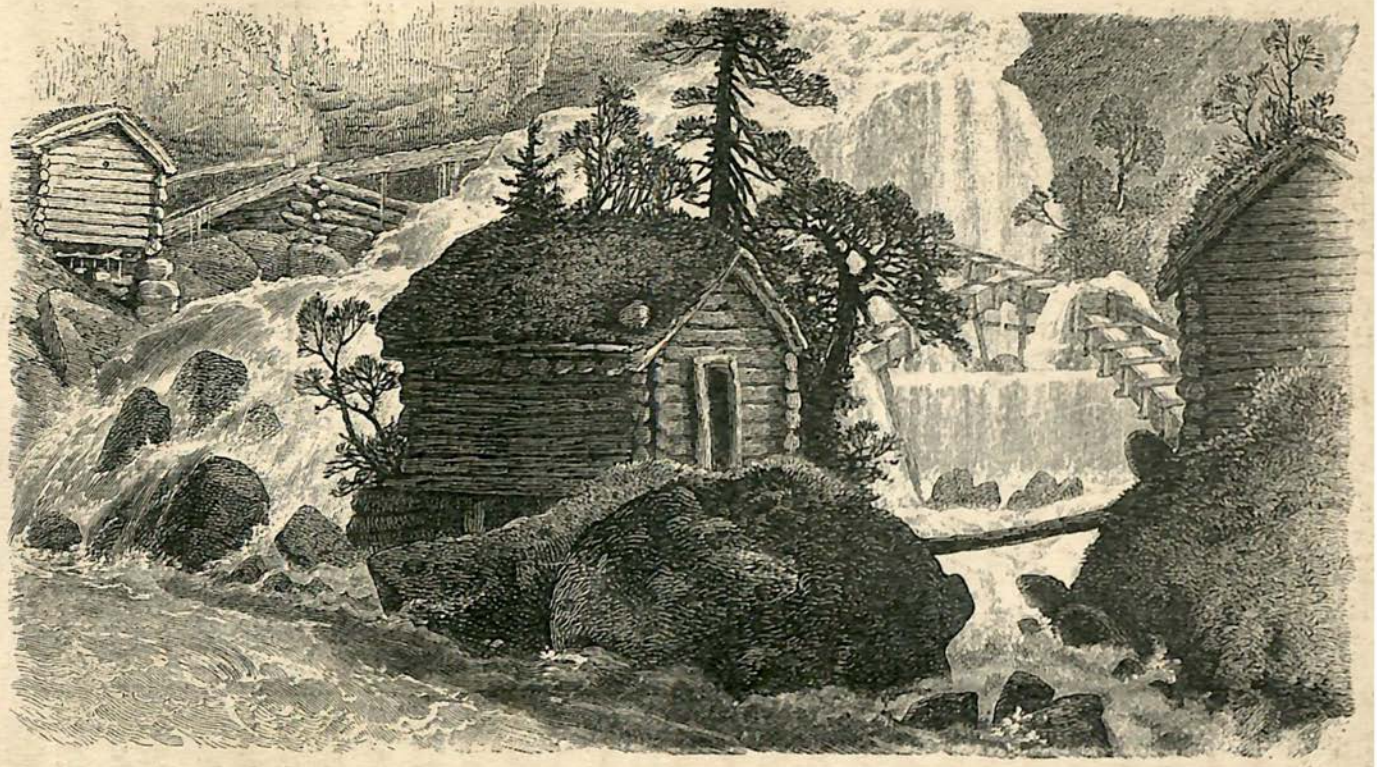
Everywhere there is a sound of many waters. All these fjords have numberless branches; every branch has its river, or torrent, or waterfall, and sometimes the waterfalls are countless. If all could be brought together, all sounds concentrated, it would indeed become a land of rushing mighty waters, even more than it is; a noise that would rival the ocean in its raging moods.

Steamers now go up these fjords; but the day has not so very long gone by that you had to take your own boat and row and sail about them; turn into and explore every creek and crevice, and so become intimately acquainted with the hidden beauties of this wonderful land. Those who are wise do so still. But how many are wise? Who has patience and a mind great enough to abandon steam, and see a little intimately, rather than much on the surface? Who does anything thoroughly in this age? It would take the holidays of a lifetime thus to explore the beauties of Norway, but the result would be a perfect satisfaction, an infinite delight; the consciousness of having done at least one thing well.

The waterfalls of Norway are in themselves a study. A few are gigantic; but an infinite number that have made no name for themselves yet charm by their beauty as much as the chief falls overawe by force and volume. A long summer devoted to the Hardanger fjord alone would not half exhaust its resources. But you would become acquainted with a few of the greatest torrents of Norway, and with an infinite number of the most beautiful. Day after day would open up fresh wonders. You would live in an ideal world, passing all your dreams of what is fair in Nature; all your hours would be steeped in romance. You might sail and row under the shadow of great mountains; land, and explore untrodden forests; bask in the rays of a hot midsummer sun; take shelter in caves where, on the hottest midsummer day, the sun never penetrates and water freezes.

The waterfalls of other countries have not a tenth of the attraction possessed by those of Norway. Niagara overwhelms you with its torrent. You walk beneath the cataract and listen to the mighty roar, and come out at the other end almost wondering whether you are a fish or a man.

You gaze upon Schaffhausen from the windows of a charming hotel, where everything is made easy and luxurious. In the dining-room you are waited upon by young ladies, educated and well brought up, the daughters of professional men and others, who go there for the season to be instructed in the mysteries of housekeeping, and to become good wives. Dressed



IN SOUND OF MANY WATERS.

in the rich costume of their country, decked in ornaments of gold and silver, they minister with a refined grace which fills you with silent admiration. Well for you if your stay is limited and you depart heart-whole. Standing in rows near the doorway, involuntarily you make them obeisance as you depart, and they return it with a gracious curtsey. They are not handmaidens, but queens holding a court.

From the wide French-windows of the dining-room, or on the balcony beyond, you may take your coffee, and look upon that mass of ever-falling water. It is a miniature Niagara. Afar-off stretches the long chain of the Alps down into Italy: peak upon peak, pile beyond pile, flashing rosy red at sunset—a view on which to gaze when dying; a scene worthy of Paradise.

At Gastein the vision is narrowed. Mountains close about you, press you in on every side, weigh down upon you after many days with a sense of suffocation. The waterfall, one of the great falls of Europe, rushes down in one long, mighty torrent through the narrow gorge. It dashes furiously over great boulders, empties itself at the bottom of a ravine, and then flows through the valleys in a silver stream which for a time becomes strangely calm and peaceful. You cannot escape from the oppression of the mountains; and nervous patients who have gone there in search of health have occasionally been driven mad by the constant mighty rush and roar of the water. The little church on the hill, the religious proces-

sions that wind about the hillsides on high days and holy days, would suggest peace to your heart, but in sight and sound of that mighty fall there is no peace.

Amongst all these falls you still feel yourself in the world. To be alone amongst them is impossible. They are too much frequented and sought after: and if anything could make them commonplace or take from their beauty it is the crowds of sightseers that surround you on all sides. At Gastein, it is true, it is a little crowd of invalids, but that only gives it an additional element of melancholy.

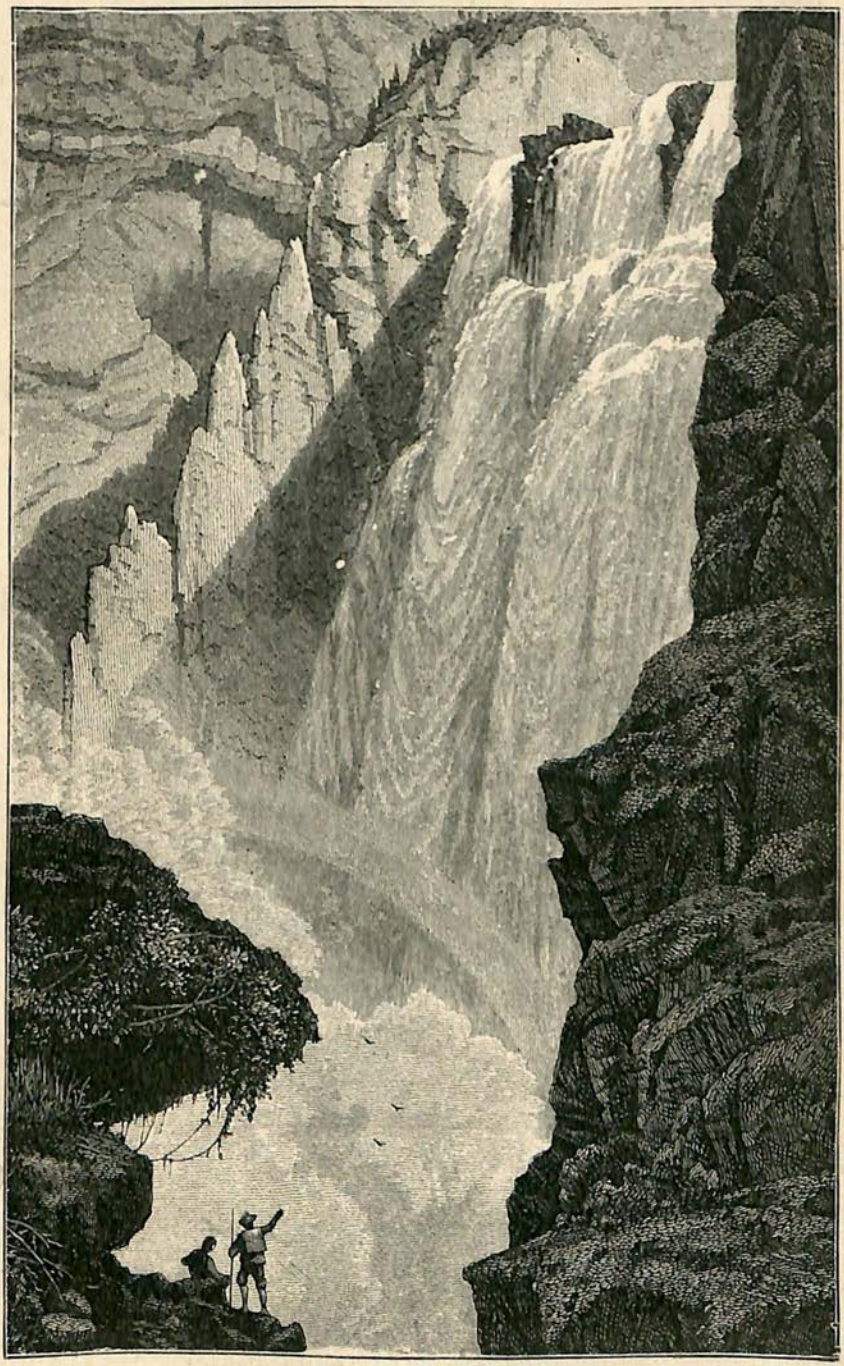
But the great waterfalls of Norway are different. They are remote and difficult to reach; they are amidst the mountains; they roar and thunder for ever in desert-like solitudes; you come upon them surrounded by all that is beautiful and wild and romantic in Nature. There are three falls of the first magnitude in Norway: the Vöringfos, the Skjæggedalsfos, and the Rjukenfos. The first two are in the neighbourhood of the Hardanger. The third we have already contemplated. It has nothing to do with the Hardanger. It is less remote, requires less labour to reach; but, as we have seen, it is situated in a district of most stupendous, overwhelming beauty.

For the Vöringfos, you may, if you please, sail up the Hardanger, and absolutely revel in the surrounding wonders. You may bask in the sunshine, watch the shadows lengthening on the hill sides, the gloom

of the forests deepening; gaze upon the rainbows formed by the ascending spray from innumerable waterfalls; watch the twilight gather, and the stars come out one by one to find their reflection in the calm waters over which you are gliding.

At the very end of one of the short branches of the Hardanger—the Eidfjord—you come to Vik. It is a wild, barren spot. High, frowning mountains surround you. This might be the end of the world. Years ago a solitary farm-house, rough and rude, some 4,000 feet above the level of the sea, was the only shelter found by the traveller—like so many of the present shelters in other parts of Norway. Now the farm-house has become a more civilised inn kept by two brothers.

But before reaching the Vöringfos you have work before you. The Brothers Næsheim, who keep the inn, having done their best, send you on your way rejoicing. About a mile's walk through all this wild scenery, these frowning mountains, brings you to Eidfjordvandet. Nothing is more romantic than these remote mountain lakes. Here you take boat, and a short row lands you at Saebo. Again you might fancy yourself at the end of the world. A great wall of rock confronts you. Its size and majesty are almost appalling. In the distance snowy peaks rise heavenwards, some 6,000 or 7,000 feet high. Go when you will, these eternal snows will greet you. The sun seems to have no power upon them, except to make them glitter like bridal robes



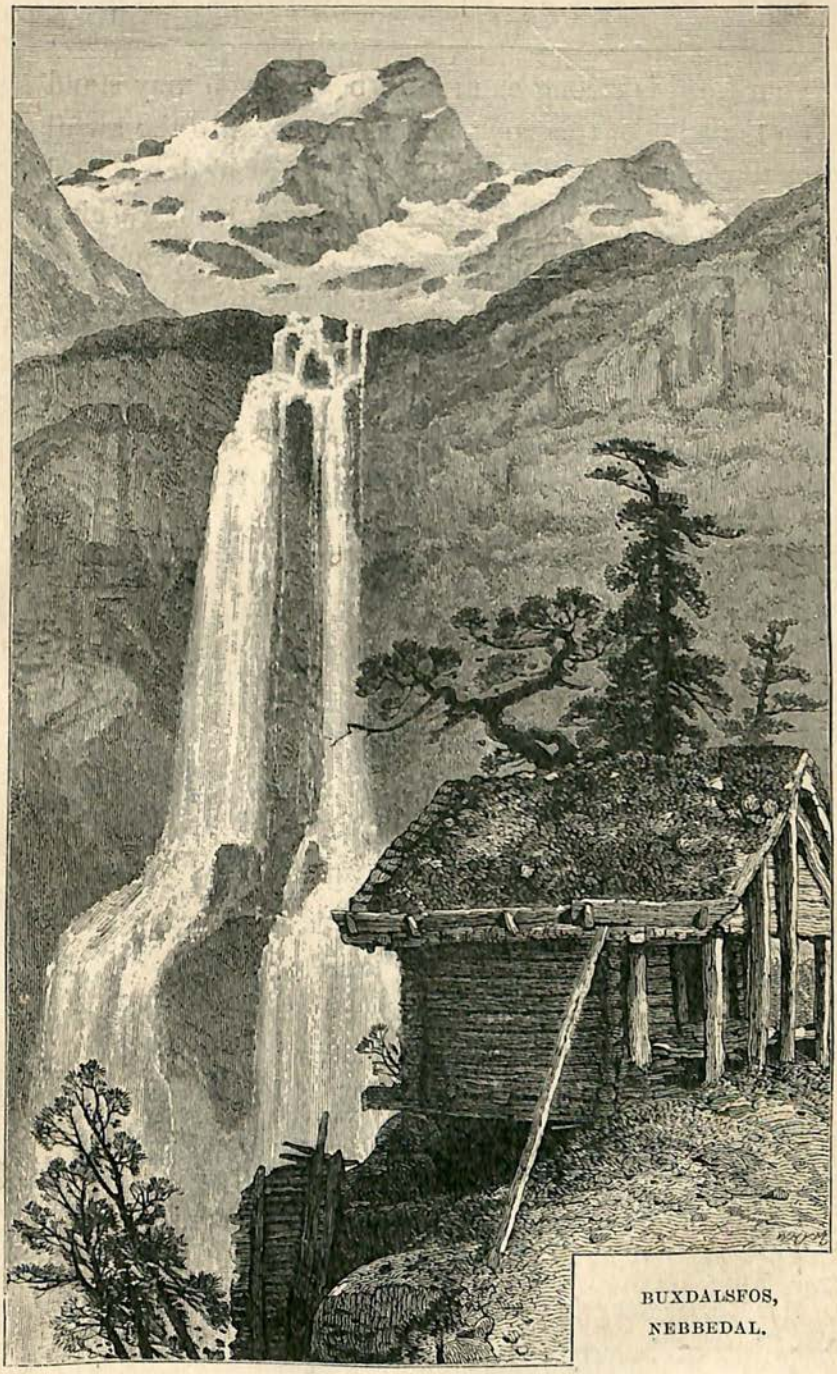
THE VÖRINGFOS.

studded with diamonds. There is a good deal of moorland about here; marshy ground where snipe-shooting ought to be abundant.

If you are a good walker you will go on foot up to the fall. Once upon a time there was nothing else for it but to walk. Now there is a bridle-road up the gloomy, grand ravine, to Maabö farm, where you may change your brave little surefooted horse for another, equally good and trustworthy. The torrent of the Bjoreia rushes madly down the gorge, now on your right hand, now on your left. You are in sound of many waters.

At length you hear a mighty thundering, and immediately after, almost without warning, find yourself in front of the celebrated Vöringfos. Closed in by perpendicular walls of rock, surrounding it almost like an amphitheatre, a witch's cauldron too great for the largest race of giants ever known, the great volume of water for ever leaps the chasm in a clear fall of some six hundred feet. The roar and weight of water are tremendous. If you wish to see the fall from above, you must take a different route from Maabö, where the valley seems to have been cleft in two. The upper road will lead you through a long stretch of moorland, wild and desolate until you reach Höl farm, which is close to the fall.

The best position for looking down upon it is from a slippery rock, made smooth by ancient glacial action, shelving towards the cataract, undermined by the water, and overhanging the boiling foam. If

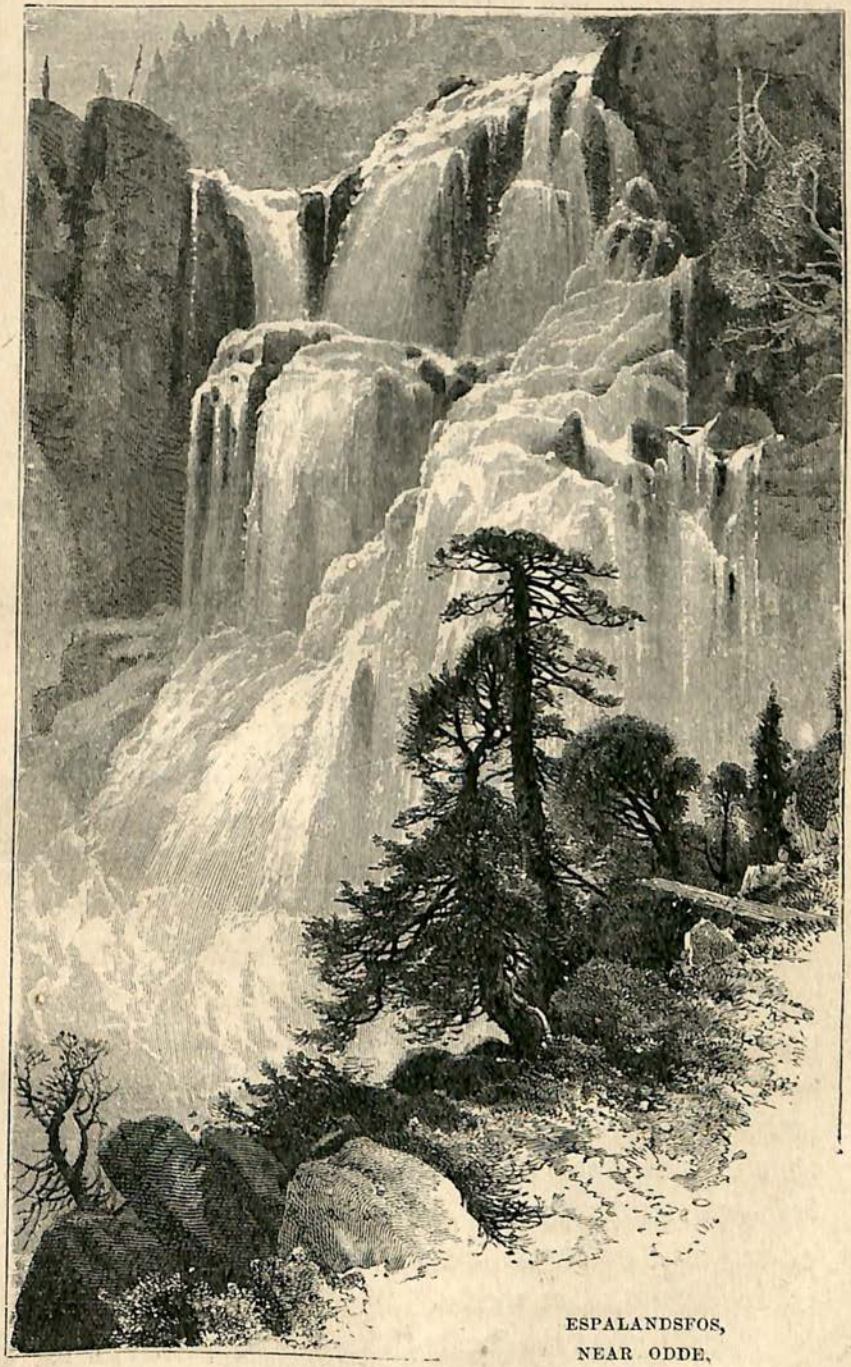


BUXDALSFOS,
NEBBEDAL.

your head is strong enough to bear it, you may stand on the edge of this rock, and look over into the awful cauldron; or you may throw yourself down, and crawl to the edge like a lizard, and watch the rushing torrent and the whirling foam and the clouds of spray. The horrible feeling of wanting to throw yourself over, which seems common to all, will seize you, and you slip backwards in terror of your life. You can trace the course of the water, which, having taken its fearful leap, goes onwards down the gorge, and you feel once more, as you feel so often in Norway, that you are in the midst of rushing mighty waters. Not half so sublime and terrific would they be without all this accompaniment of savage Nature, these everlasting, immovable rocks, these towering, frowning mountains.

Further up the Hardanger, branching off into the Sörfjord, you come to Odde. It is the very end of the fjord. I do not know that Odde in itself is so beautiful and striking as the places it leads to. There are good hotels as far as the buildings are concerned, but when there we were simply half starved. It was all outward show, and we never had one good meal in Odde—with one exception, which we shall come to presently.

We started one hot and brilliant morning for the Skjæggedalsfos: also called the Ringedalsfos: one of the three largest falls in Norway, and the second in point of beauty. It was a serious undertaking, in-

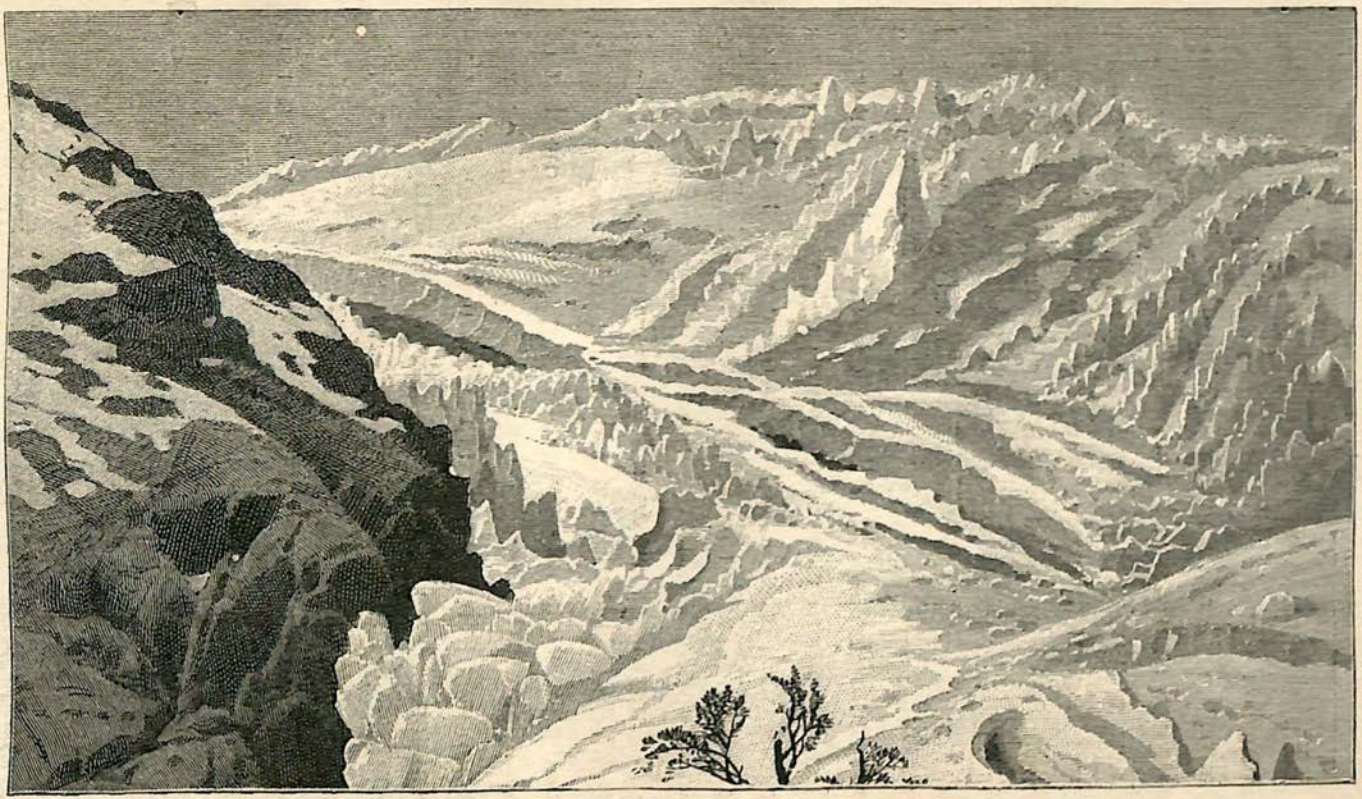


ESPALANDSFOS,
NEAR ODDE.

volving ten or twelve hours' hard work. We were a party of six or seven, for we had made pleasant friends on the road, as one may do in Norway above all other countries. Day after day, people journeying the same way are thrown together, and if they happen to "synchronise," the pleasures of travelling are proportionately increased. It was so in this instance. The ladies were charming; we had our Rector to keep us in order, though he added immensely to our fun and amusement; we started in the highest of spirits consistent with respectability. The day before we had visited the Buerbræ; a day of intense enjoyment, but of less labour than our present undertaking.

We climbed the steep ascent above Odde. The river rushed and foamed beside our path with the speed and strength of a torrent. We crossed it on the old bridge, where children stood with plates of mountain strawberries; and if these could be resisted, the great blue eyes, the silent appeals of the little folk, could not. We looked down upon Odde, sleeping in the plain at the head of the lake; a cluster of wooden houses, bright and cheerful, gilded by the sunshine, rich in cherry gardens full of fruit ripe and luscious. The church spire pointed skywards, but though we spent a Sunday there, we had no service and saw no costumes. The clergyman has three churches to minister unto, and so service is held at Odde once in three weeks.

Just beyond the bridge we took boat across the



THE BUERBRAE.

lake, which is so much higher than the fjord, and supplies the short, rushing river that empties itself into the Hardanger with a sound of many waters. Strong men rowed us swiftly across. The valley here is pretty broad, and as you journey onwards you find it is one of the loveliest in Norway, commanding some of the finest and grandest views. It is made musical by waterfalls which run down the mountain sides, some of them all white foam and feathery spray: fall following fall, beautiful as a vision. The whole valley is one of the most interesting in Norway, leading you over mountain passes white with eternal snows, broken with the track of the reindeer, into wild, rugged, half-civilised Thelemarken.

But to-day we merely rowed across the lake and landed at the foot of the Tyssedal. It is on the right, and the mountains seem to divide in a narrow cleft of wonderfully romantic and wild beauty for the express purpose of making you a way up to the Skjæggedalsfos. Here began our real work: truly a labour of love: truly seeking the picturesque under difficulties. We had a hard, mountainous walk before us of two or three hours. Every step was a toil and counted for three ordinary steps. It was steep and arduous from the beginning, but broad and open where we first landed, overshadowed by pine trees which cast grateful shadows upon our zigzag path.

This soon disappeared. The gorge narrowed, the

mountains drew together. It was wild and savage and desolate in the extreme. The river or mountain torrent ran at the bottom of the valley over its rocky bed, through briar and tangle, occasionally lost in the small fir trees that often fringed our way. Sometimes we were as much as a thousand feet above it, and looked down the marvellous precipice upon a scene inconceivably wild and grand. Gazing back from such a height, we had a distant view of the Folgefond, its snow-peaks and ice-fields pure and beautiful and far off, like a bride-cake spread for the marriage feast of celestial beings. Our path, always wild and rugged, sometimes led us over great surfaces of slanting rock that required all our dexterity to cross: rocks rendered smooth and slippery by glacial action. The mountains were ever about us, now fir-clad, like "forests upon a thousand hills," now rugged, barren, and rocky. The valley never widened.

It was very hard work, and seemed interminable. We waited for the end as night watchers for the morning. Yet the beauty of our way kept us up. If occasionally we grew footsore our spirits never flagged. How could they? We were going through all that is grandest and most inspiring on earth. The ladies of our party were the bravest and most untiring of all. Every now and then, if an ominous silence fell upon the toilers, Miss X. with her magic wand would exorcise us back to freshness and vigour and cheerfulness; and wit and wisdom would once

more flow from the Rector upon his appreciative hearers.

On and on we went, up pathways and down pathways, scaling rocks, resting awhile on fallen trees, now and then stealing a glance at our watches. We all declared we were growing more and more fresh and ethereal. "L'appétit vient en mangeant," why not strength in walking? If we occasionally thought that all this had to be gone through again some four or five hours hence, we put the sensation from us; or rather we gloried in the idea that this was only the first half of a very delightful day in our lives.

At length the first stage of our pilgrimage was over. We reached Skjæggedal farm—a desolate mountain farm, rough and rude, kept by people not too civilised. There was one poor deformed creature, the sight of whom was a nameless horror which made us turn away. But we noticed that our Rector went up and spoke to him kindly and considerately, showing forth a charity that did honour to his calling. It was one of life's roadside lessons, small in itself, but of more use than a sermon.

At the farm we found men to row us across the two mountain lakes lying between us and the fall. The first lake was short and soon over. We landed on a strip of marshy ground where grew Multerberg, which sent E. into the ecstasies every Norwegian feels at the sight of the yellow fruit, just as the Savoyard is affected by the vision of his mountains.

SLETTAFOS.

Then came the second lake, which was to see the end of our journey: a lake wild and grand, four or five miles long. The mountains towered around us, gloomy and barren, descending sometimes almost perpendicularly to the water. Here again we caught sight of the distant Folgefond, white, beautiful, and distant. To our left we came upon the Twin Fall, so lovely and feathery that for a moment we almost fancied this the celebrated Skjæggedalsfos. But it was only one of the minor falls that seem to multiply themselves in Norway.

Presently we heard the roar of rushing mighty waters, and then all at once, in a corner of the lake, surrounded by perpendicular walls of rock, we saw the great Skjæggedalsfos. From the very first moment it was infinitely beautiful. It has not the ponderous mass of water possessed by the Vöringfos; it has not quite its wild, breathless rush and roar; but the water falls in more beautiful folds and forms, and the spray rises in more ethereal clouds.

Our boat shot up to the shore, and we landed. There was a small settlement of wooden houses, or huts, here; a sufficiency of green turf on which to spread our table and enjoy our Arcadian, well-earned repast. But first we went up to the fall for a long, long look. We would have the flow of soul before the feast of reason.

It was worth all our toil. Like the Vöringfos and the Rjukenfos, it is almost surrounded by rocky, per-

pendicular walls. The water, in great volume, takes a leap of some 700 feet, falling in forms and shapes of exquisite beauty. Of the greater falls it is perhaps the most graceful. The water constantly takes designs of almost lace-work delicacy, for ever changing and varying. Its foam is white as the driven snow. It deafens you with its roar. Its spray scatters far and near, and you must keep at a distance if you do not wish to be wet through for your return journey. You were melting with heat during your walk, but now, under the shadow of the fall, you shiver with cold.

Once more you are in sound of many waters. You cannot tear yourself away from them. Great fragments of slippery rock, smooth and wet with spray, are in all directions. Ferns grow about them. You have to pilot yourself amongst them as best you can, and if you tumble into a crevice you must not expect anyone to jeopardise his own safety by coming to your rescue. It is recorded of a Public School monitor that when drowning, the third time he rose he had the presence of mind to cry out "Fag!" and two fags had to jump in reluctantly to the rescue. But here there is no fag at hand: and everyone does not possess the kindly spirit of our Rector, who constantly placed the happiness and welfare of others before his own. If all the travellers one met were actuated by this same spirit of consideration, what a charm would be added to one's wanderings. Especially in these days, when travellers are

legion. But this spirit is not for the fashion of this world.

To-day we none of us fell into cracks and crevices; but presently, within sight and sound of the fall, assembled round the festive board; a board fit for Titania. The ladies put down umbrellas and discarded mackintoshes, with which they had braved the spray of the torrent. Miss X., laying aside her magic wand, charmed with the magic of her words and smiles. Miss Y. dispensed all sorts of favours and delicacies, and served with a kindly spirit that proved her to be both Martha and Mary in one; and I fear that just at that moment the virtues of Martha were appreciated beyond their measure. Z. sent round the loving cup, and made us his slaves for ever.

What could be greater happiness? The lake spread before us its calm, gloomy, deep-looking waters. Mountains towered on all sides. We were shut in by them; shut out from the world. The mighty waterfall poured down all its torrent and beauty for us. We had the place absolutely to ourselves, enjoyed our repose, renewed our strength. The tug of war was yet to come. We had, as it were, reversed matters, and the Hill of Difficulty had still to be climbed. Presently a boat was seen approaching with a fresh cargo of pilgrims. We were about to depart, and congratulated ourselves upon our earlier march. As they landed we set off again. We were leaving enchanted ground, and bade farewell, a

long, silent farewell, to the waterfall. Probably we should never see it again, even though we paid Norway many a subsequent visit.

We started across the lake in full view of the far-off Folgefond, and in admiration of the Twin Fall, even after all the grandeur and beauty of the greater fall. In due time we reached the Skjæggedal farm, where we refreshed ourselves with coffee, taken in a barn-like room and roughly served. But any room or no room, so that we had coffee, would have been equally welcome in the midst of this stupendous scenery. One felt very out of the world, for it required a pilgrimage to get back into it. But we started bravely upon our long and difficult walk, and if anyone's heart sank a little at the prospect, no one else knew anything about it.

And bravely we kept it up to the end. Before it was over the way certainly seemed long drawn out, and we thought less of the beauties of Nature than of a certain small cottage bordering the lake below, where we hoped to find rest and refreshment. At least one of the party finished up with an inevitable splitting headache. There was a little less music in the rush of the river, a little less grandeur in the rugged, pine-clad mountains. But in spite of headache and fatigue—we had now been undergoing hard labour for nine or ten hours—the walk left behind it an impression never to be forgotten. And by-and-by the mountains widened, and we reached the zigzag road and passed into the shade of the pines.

There lay the lake, and our boat, and the rowers; and there was our desired haven, the cottage, with its door hospitably open. But its resources were few. At first we feared we should get nothing; our hearts fainted within us. The woman, young and smiling, made us welcome, but she could not do the impossible. We went into a quaint, old-fashioned room, with plain rough furniture and small windows, and no fire on the hearth. But we found she could make us coffee if we would wait, and we had biscuits with us, remnant of our Arcadian repast. She went up the garden into an outhouse and we followed her; the Rector, Z. and the writer. There we gathered sticks and lighted a fire, and helped her to boil the kettle. The ladies sat in state in the reception room, and E. kept watch and ward over them with Norwegian chivalry; and they all waited in faith and hope.

Presently we reappeared; and no boar was ever carried into ancient feast with greater triumph than we displayed in announcing our aromatic beverage. Headaches vanished and smiles wreathed themselves; the glass of life once more ran in golden sands. We set our Rector in the middle of the room and sat round him like a devoted, attentive flock. Fragrant steam arose from our cups, and as there was one cup short, Z. took the sugar basin. This was the one grateful meal alluded to in an earlier page. No coffee ever had the flavour of that brew. It put new life into us, and once more set flowing the sources of fun and mirth. The Rector gave us no sermon—he

was a sermon in himself—but we felt in charity with all men.

All too soon we found ourselves shooting across the lake, approaching the old bridge which was our last landing-stage. There were the same children holding out apparently the very same mountain strawberries, looking at us with the same appealing eyes. We passed down beside the rushing, rugged torrent, and finally came to an anchor at the hotel. It had been a day to be remembered, though not the only day, and not the only excursion that made our stay in Odde memorable.

Norway abounds in these rushing mighty waters. They make music in our ears for ever. We have only to think about them and we see them and hear them. We see the deep gorges, the towering pine-clad hills. We remember days that were made happy by special experiences and pleasant friends. Over the sound of the waters floats the music of voices and laughter, and scraps of conversation that took an unexpected turn or brought out a kindly thought. There is a sense of cool spray and pleasant breezes and sparkling sunshine lurking in the memory. The heart is stirred to an emotion that has a ring of sadness in it inevitable to all past happiness. The twin genii of Pleasure and Pain go hand in hand through life. As shade enhances light, so we must have the shadows of life to bring out the full glory of our sunshine.

After all, these rushing mighty waters are an emblem of ourselves. We are tossed about on life's

stormy ocean, driven and shipwrecked, but escaping with our lives. Until at last, spent and broken, disillusioned, having drunk of our water of Meribah, our apples turned to ashes and our harps unstrung, we glide into a Haven where the turbulent waves of life are at rest, and the sound of the many waters of earth has ceased for ever.

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